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In: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 151 (1995), no: 1, Leiden, 1-22

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The Discovery of Indonesia

Western (non-Dutch) Historiography on the Decolonization of Indonesia

'Independence from the Netherlands' was the name of a conference organized by the VGTE (Society for Twentieth-Century History) in The Hague on 19 November 1993. This name is open to two different interpretations. Firstly, it echoes a Dutch Communist Party slogan that was widely popularized between the two World Wars ('Indies independence from the Netherlands now'), which summarized the party's standpoint on the status of the then Dutch East Indies in rather a provocative way. Taken in this sense, the name should be viewed as a programme inviting reflection, half a century after its implementation, on how precisely this former communist programme was realized. Thus interpreted, the name would require a revised review of the decolonization of Indonesia. However, the name may also allude to a publicly established fact, referring to a point in time at which the colonial ties had already been severed, or in other words, to Indonesia as an independent state. If the name is taken in this sense, a number of possible subjects for historical reflection present themselves.

This essay is intended to explore the reactions of Western, non-Dutch, historiography to the foundation of the Republik Indonesia and the events leading up to and following it. The choice of this essentially historiographical topic requires some explanation. With published sources in the form of memoirs, surveys, descriptions and analyses by both Dutch and Indonesian authors existing in abundance, it seemed interesting, and even useful, to go into at least some of the reasons why historians from other Western countries came to study Indonesia. It turned out to be impossible to do so without giving at least a brief outline – which made the subject even more intriguing – of the main developments in historical research and teaching in the Western countries concerned after the Second World War. Against this background, it was possible to compare the contributions of the respective historians with one another. It should be noted in this connection that Western historiography here is taken to include American,

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Australian and Western European historical publications.

In dealing with this subject, I shall try to answer the following questions. Why did the Americans, Australians, British, Germans and French turn to the study of Indonesia and how much of their output was based on actual historical research? On what subjects did these historians concentrate, and why? Are there any significant differences between the American and Australian approach on the one hand and that adopted by the Western European countries, which were once colonial rulers themselves, on the other? Not all of these questions are entirely original, of course. The pioneering role of American universities, for instance, is well-known.

In the United States, as well as for certain sections of Australian society, the Indonesian struggle for independence had a strong appeal, while the appearance of the Republik Indonesia on the international stage automatically prompted the establishment of diplomatic and other relations with the new republic by all the other countries. Subsequently, a need for knowledge of the political and social structures of Indonesia, of its economic potential and strategic importance, and also of its recent history made itself felt almost everywhere. The need for information could no longer be satisfied by the appraisals of a few individual researchers. Moreover, especially the Americans and Australians wanted to have a firsthand knowledge of and establish direct contact with Indonesia. They were no longer content to be dependent on the intermediary services of the former colonizing power, the Netherlands. Neither were the few international institutes which had been active in the field of Indonesian studies from before the Second World War – the French Institut Colonial International (since 1894) and the American Institute of Pacific Relations (since 1925) – able to cater to the new needs, as until then they hardly amounted to anything more than random conglomerations of specializations of individual researchers. A broad area-specific focus covering historical backgrounds as well as recent developments was needed, with special attention to individual peoples and countries within this area. It was obvious that for the achievement of this aim a regular financial basis was necessary. Since the beginning of the 1950s many Western scholars, particularly from the social sciences, have turned to the study of Indonesia with this aim in mind. They have as it were 'discovered' Indonesia.

Before going into the subject of the historiography of the decolonization of Indonesia, I should point out that the bibliographical survey on the following pages makes no claim to exhaustiveness. The works discussed are intended to be no more than a representative selection.

1. The United States

In the United States the new type of research was organized in multi-disciplinary area-specific programmes. In the mid-fifties programmes of intensive Southeast Asian studies were initiated with broad, long-term gov-

ernment support, especially at the universities of Yale, Cornell and Michigan. In consequence of the multidisciplinary approach, concepts and methods adopted from the political sciences, sociology, anthropology and economics came into vogue, while the study of the relevant languages was rightly considered a prerequisite. Within the Southeast Asia area special attention was given to Indonesia, in particular the Indonesian revolution. This had much to do with the (war-time) experiences of the two most prominent researchers / programme managers, Harry J. Benda and George McT. Kahin. Benda, who was the prime mover of the programme at Yale, had been interned in Japanese prison camps in Indonesia during the war. He published his well-known study on Indonesian Islam during the Japanese occupation, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun*, in 1958. Kahin witnessed the final stages of the Indonesian struggle for independence in Yogyakarta and published his *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* as early as 1952. What gave this 'masterpiece of committed scholarship' (Reid 1977:77) its world-wide appeal was its undisguised sympathy with the Indonesian cause.

Kahin was (the first) director of the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project (CMIP), set up by himself and John Echols in 1954, until 1989. Later on similar specialized projects were launched at all other American universities with Southeast Asia programmes. These programmes had initially been designed on the basis of the idea that the Southeast Asian area possessed certain common features which distinguished it from other areas such as India, China and Japan. An area identified as such on the basis of common features was consequently assumed to be a suitable object of study as a single entity. In the case of Southeast Asia, however, these assumptions soon proved rather unrealistic. Individual researchers occupied themselves not with the entire area but rather with one specific country in that area. They were Philippinists, Indonesianists, or Thai or Vietnam specialists. Later on a similar development was discernible in the multidisciplinary approach, although historical studies continued to benefit from fruitful co-operation with other disciplines. The frequent adoption by historians of the sociological twin concept of 'continuity and change' may serve as an example of the results of such co-operation.

American Southeast Asian studies owed their existence and rapid development to the government's need for knowledge about and information on the area concerned. The government, via learned societies and other organizations and funding institutions, such as the Ford Foundation, stimulated universities to set up programmes of study and appoint the necessary staff for these. They had their heyday in the 1950s and '60s. The Vietnam war and its aftermath, however, led the funding agencies to lose interest in a continuation of these programmes. The interest of students had also declined sharply. For years, American universities had been the scene of violent anti-Vietnam demonstrations, sometimes with serious repercussions for teaching and research. Cornell suffered the consequences at least

twice. At the time of the 1965 coup in Indonesia and its bloody aftermath, for instance, Cornell had no real finger on the pulse in Jakarta or elsewhere in Java, and later attempts to catch up with events were rather unsuccessful. Another matter for concern was the decision of Ruth McVey, who had made a name for herself as an Indonesia specialist not only at the CMIP, to leave Cornell for a position at the London School of Oriental and African Studies out of disgust with American Vietnam policy. From then on the American programmes suffered drastic reductions in funding. Remarkably, of all the Southeast Asian countries Indonesia kept attracting the most interest from young scholars. In 1976, 20 out of the total of 41 applications for dissertation grants in the social sciences were for theses focused on this country (Szanton 1981: 79).

For some American scholars, the discovery of Indonesia turned out to be a complex experience, both because of their exclusively Western training and as a result of the general political climate during the Cold War. Kahin and the Australian Indonesianist Herbert Feith, who published at Cornell, are typical examples of this (Van Vught 1982). As political scientists trained in the Western traditions of democratic government, they assumed that the Indonesian republic, ruled as it was in its formative years by a Western-educated nationalist leadership, would evolve along similar democratic lines. When this did not eventuate and President Sukarno in 1958 introduced his Guided Democracy concept, they were disappointed and kept wondering what had gone 'wrong' in Indonesia, until Benda (a historian who had taken a Ph.D. in political sciences from Cornell) explained in a famous article that the underlying assumption was a typically Western presupposition and therefore irrelevant (Benda 1964). This presupposition had also led Kahin, in his above-mentioned work, to give insufficient attention to a powerful movement in Indonesian politics led by Tan Malaka, which aimed at a social revolution before and after independence. The picture drawn by Kahin was corrected in, among others, the work of Benedict Anderson, Kahin's successor as director of the CMIP.

Ruth McVey, too, had originally studied political science. Trained at Harvard as a Soviet specialist, she wrote a considerable number of works bearing the imprint of her original specialization. Starting with an account of the standpoint adopted by the Soviet Union towards the Indonesian revolution, she moved on to a study of the history of communist organizations in Indonesia and the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI).

The first historian to take a Ph.D. at the CMIP, in 1964, was John Smail. He deliberately gave his book on Bandung in the *bersiap* period (August 1945 to March 1946) the subtitle 'a contribution to the social history of the Indonesian revolution'. Smail discovered a historical Indonesia that was completely different from the picture painted by his predecessors. Deviating from the common perspective of the anti-colonial struggle against the Dutch and analysing what happened in one particular place in one particular, short but crucial, period during the revolution, in which

neither the Republican nor the Dutch government exercised much influence, he reached certain conclusions which proved to be harbingers of a new trend in research. An internal Indonesian conflict between the advocates of '*diplomasi*' (diplomacy and negotiation) and those of '*perjuangan*' (war), the inadequacy of the Marxist theory of the struggle between the classes, a generation conflict (observed by Anderson, too), and a loss of power by the traditional social elites were seen to constitute the hitherto almost unknown ingredients of the Indonesian revolution.

Among the scholars at Cornell, Audrey Kahin should also be mentioned. After Smail's attempt at writing local history, she tried a regional historical approach to the revolutionary period, focusing her attention on West Sumatra. This type of research, studying events at the local and regional levels, provided a better insight into social structures and subsequent changes than studies at the national level (A. Kahin 1985).

Two other important achievements of the CMIP should be mentioned here. The first is the opening of its training and research facilities to foreign scholars, in particular Indonesians, among them several scholars who later published historical studies, such as Deliar Noer (on modern Islam), Djajadiningrat (on the Dutch-Indonesian Hoge Veluwe negotiations), Selosoemardjan (former secretary to Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX, on social change in Yogyakarta), and Soedjatmoko (on Indonesian historiography), as well as Taufik Abdullah, Koentjaraningrat, Sartono Kartodirdjo, and others. The second is the biannual publication of the interdisciplinary periodical *Indonesia*, on the initiative and under the supervision of Benedict Anderson, from April 1966 onward. Over the years, there has been a noticeable shift in the contents of the historical contributions to this journal. The earlier issues occasionally presented in English translation the reminiscences of Indonesians of the Japanese period and the anti-colonial war, while the more recent issues often reflect modern trends in the historiography of the revolution, focusing, for instance, on the Darul Islam and on local (Surakarta) or regional (Bali, East Sumatra) developments. To the regular reader of the 'In Memoriam' column a reliable picture was presented of the Indonesian nationalist leaders and freedom fighters, who have now almost all passed away. It should be noted that the publication of memoirs and other personal documents in *Indonesia* was in line with the general policy of the CMIP, which also included the collection and publication of primary sources.

Over the years, as was to be expected, the historical publications of Cornell also underwent a shift in accent. Two changes in particular should be noted here. In the first place, a change of subject occurred. Alongside the favourite topics – the Dutch-Indonesian conflict and Indonesian politics – attention was given to the forces that had helped shape political and social conditions in modern Indonesia. As a consequence, broader segments of the population now entered the picture, in addition to the national elite, and breaks in social continuity in the revolutionary period

became apparent. Anderson's dissertation was published under the revealing title 'The Pemuda revolution'.¹ In the second place, there was a gradual increase in the historical component of multidisciplinary research. The colonial period began attracting more attention, involving American scholars more and more in the ongoing debate about, for instance, the merits and demerits of Geertz's agricultural involution theory between their Dutch and Indonesian counterparts.² It should be noted how the CMIP studies programme treated the Chinese minority in Indonesia as a separate object of study from the start. This indicates the early recognition by the CMIP of one of the major problems faced by the young Indonesian state, namely that posed by the Chinese minority. Wilmott's valuable book dealt with that particular side of the studies programme (Wilmott 1961).

Kahin, looking back on 35 years of the CMIP in 1989, in all honesty listed not only the positive aspects of the programme, but also its shortcomings (Kahin 1989). These are, apart from the 'neglect' of the Indonesian coup of 1965 – a neglect made up for by Anderson, McVey and Bunnell three months after the event in an analysis of this coup that was sounder than anything said on the subject in Jakarta – the lack of attention for the political role of the Indonesian army, for the more recent history of the PKI, for Islam as a political agent, for the islands outside Java, and for agrarian problems in general. Kahin also expressed the view that a new biography of Sukarno was called for. Anyone reviewing the historical production in this field at the international level at present will be satisfied to find all these subjects adequately dealt with.

Cornell has played a pioneering role unrivalled by any other American university, not even Yale, where Benda died in 1971. Nevertheless, Yale remained an important centre of Indonesian studies where a number of specialists were active. Similar centres existed elsewhere, often inspired by leading scholars such as Tungun Siagian (the University of Madison, Wisconsin), Robert van Niel (Honolulu, Hawaii)³, and William H. Frederick (Athens, Ohio). Although most of the work done has been in the fields of political science, sociology and anthropology, several studies testify to an increase rather than decrease in interest in Indonesian history. Yale and, since the 1980s, Athens, Ohio, at this moment are universities at which many historical studies, including studies by non-Americans, are being published. To name just two examples: as a joint Australian-Japanese venture, Anthony Reid and Akira Oki published a collection of seventeen

¹ Anderson viewed the *pemuda* as a military and political force with its own dynamics (Anderson 1972), a view which was later criticized by De Jong (1988:85).

² For a recent review of the debate about Geertz's theory see King 1994.

³ Van Niel was one of the first American historians to study Indonesian history outside Cornell and Yale universities. After publication of his book on the modern Indonesian elite (Van Niel 1960, reprint 1984), he wrote various essays on the nineteenth-century Dutch Cultivation System in Indonesia which have recently been published in a single volume (Van Niel 1992).

Japanese memoirs in English translation at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies of Ohio University (Reid and Akira Oki 1986), and Frederick, who wrote his Ph.D. thesis at the University of Hawaii, had his study on the 1945 revolution in Surabaya also published at Athens (Frederick 1989). But there was also historical life outside these centres, as the book on American policy vis-à-vis the Indonesian struggle for independence by McMahon (who, incidentally, was a member of the staff of the Office of the Historian of the State Department) may testify (McMahon 1981).

Finally, a few remarks must be made about the more recent development of Indonesian studies in the United States. Serious cut-backs in spending and an aversion to Southeast Asia on the part of students and the general public alike in the mid-1970s caused Southeast Asian studies to lose considerable ground and made it essential for Indonesia specialists to adopt effective survival strategies. An umbrella organization, the Southeast Regional Council of the Association for Asian Studies, instituted an Indonesian Studies Committee, which in 1973 in turn established an Indonesian Studies Summer Institute (ISSI). The summer courses offered by it, with their emphasis on language training, soon functioned as a venue for both scholars and students. They kept people's interest in Indonesia alive. Poor funding in 1982 obliged the ISSI to reorganize itself into the SEASSI (Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute), which secured the support of a consortium of universities. Additional support was sought from the government and private institutions, though on a modest scale: the lessons of the past were not forgotten by a group that had suffered the consequences of too much dependence. Meanwhile, a trend towards more discipline-specific research, at the expense of the multidisciplinary approach, had become manifest. For historical studies, the implication of this, as Frederick supposed, was 'joining ... Indonesian history to world history' (Frederick 1990).

2. Australia

At first sight, the Australian discovery of Indonesia would appear to have followed the American pattern. In the mid-fifties, Australian governments, too, started providing extra funding for a number of prominent universities to initiate new study programmes oriented towards the Malay world and more particularly to Indonesia. In Australia, too, the change from a situation in which scattered Orientalists were working independently of one another to one in which structural training facilities were made available for generations of students who in time were to provide the expertise which Australia needed in the new world after the Second World War was a major one. Here, too, the 1960s and early '70s marked the heyday of what was originally called 'Indonesian and Malay Studies' but soon developed into Southeast Asian Studies. The important periodical *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* (RIMA) still keeps the memory of that

first phase alive. The universities of Sydney and Melbourne, as well as Canberra University College, at that time a subsidiary of Melbourne University but after 1960 the nucleus of the Australian National University (ANU) at Canberra, were the three pioneers in the field, with Melbourne drawing its inspiration direct from Cornell. In the mid-seventies, likewise, the Australian government started drastically reducing its financial support.

At this point the similarity with the United States ends, however. There were considerable differences besides similarities, in fact, first and foremost in the political field. The effects of the Vietnam war were far less dramatic in Australia than they were in the United States. Moreover, in Australia people came to realize that Indonesia, both under Sukarno and under Suharto, was not only a developing country but also a significant power. Plain common sense demanded that good relations be maintained with this important neighbour. There was of course no such geographical urgency in the relations between America and Indonesia. The fact that Australian-Indonesian relations were often nevertheless strained is an indication of the uneasiness caused by this obligatory Asian-Western connection. Another difference with the American situation was that in Australia in the seventies students' interest in Southeast Asia declined but did not disappear. In the late 1980s Asian studies at Australian universities also shifted their main orientation to Japan and China, but in the meantime a substantial group of Indonesia specialists had become active. A third point of difference was the impressive Australian effort, likewise inspired by the sense of proximity and neighbourliness, to introduce Indonesian language courses, and not only at universities. In the sixties, the University of Sydney and Monash University, near Melbourne, were involved in the introduction of Bahasa Indonesia as a subject of teaching in secondary schools, while in the Northern Territory and South Australia this language was even taught at the primary level (Haridas 1981). All this may look more impressive on paper than perhaps it was in reality, but there can be no doubt that Australian policy with respect to language made its influence felt in the training of Australian Indonesia specialists.

During the sixties in Australia as in the United States the social sciences predominated in Southeast Asian studies, which set off once more the familiar old debate about the most desirable structure for the studies programme – whether it should be geared to the modern multidisciplinary area studies approach or whether it should be organized more along the lines of the traditional disciplines. In brief the outcome can be summarized as follows: area programmes were introduced wherever the foundation of new universities offered an opportunity for doing so, such as at Flinders in South Australia in 1968 and Griffith in Nathan, Queensland, in 1971, but not at universities where the traditional disciplines had become firmly established, where consequently it proved much more difficult to introduce such programmes. Of course this statement implies no judgement on the academic qualities of the graduates of the various institutions.

Two research schools were created to crown the institutional framework of Asian studies in Australia. The Centre of Southeast Asian Studies of Monash University, firstly, was founded on the American model in 1964. Here scholars like John Legge, J.A.C. Mackie and Herbert Feith were active, even though they had their work published mainly in the United States. Secondly, the Research School of Pacific Studies was established at the ANU, which, together with the National Library with its important collections, has put Canberra in the academic forefront also as far as Indonesian studies are concerned. In 1976 the Asian Studies Association of Australia was founded, which published the first issue of its *Review* in 1977. In April 1990, when its publication was taken over by Griffith University, the journal's rather long name was shortened to 'Asian Studies Review'. Today it is the most prominent Australian periodical in its field. In short, it can be said that Australia now has more expertise with regard to its northern neighbour than any other country in the world. Historical studies occupy a significant place in the publication programme, to the extent that the statement that Australians have taken the lead in Western, non-Dutch, historiography of Indonesia is no exaggeration.

The discovery of Indonesia was a fairly direct experience for the Australians. They found themselves confronted firstly in their own country with Dutch colonial authorities who, after beating a hasty retreat from Indonesia, had come to live there, and secondly, and later on, with the Dutch attempts to re-establish their rule in Indonesia. The Indonesian struggle for independence created a strong impression on particular groups of Australians. Sympathy with the nationalists and aversion to colonialism were evinced particularly by Australian trade unions, which by means of strikes and boycotts tried to cause the Dutch military operations as much damage as possible. The Australian government cautiously moved in the same direction. Journalists like Rupert Lockwood gave wide coverage to the actions of the unions.⁴ All this is well-known. Not so well-known is the fact that gradually the idea came to prevail nation-wide that Australia had played a decisive role in the attainment of Indonesian independence. Nancy Viviani, the director of the Centre for the Study of Australian-Asian relations at Griffith University, in 1982 stated this idea to be a myth. She referred in this connection to Margaret L. George's book, which convincingly demonstrated that, the progressive stand of the trade unions apart, Australian support for Indonesian nationalism had been late, ambivalent and enforced. In the years 1947-1949 public opinion in Australia had even been against Indonesian independence (Viviani 1982; George 1980).

John D. Legge of Monash University is to be regarded as the founding

⁴ Lockwood compiled a six-volume manuscript on the basis of his own articles and the materials he had collected, eventually publishing a drastically shortened and revised version of this (Lockwood 1982).

father of modern historical research on Indonesia in Australia. His studies show that he was a man of shrewd judgement. He published a history of Indonesia as well as a biography of Sukarno, both at an early date. *Indonesia*, with its emphasis on twentieth-century history, appeared in 1964 and remained the leading handbook for the subject for many years. It was only long after its third reprint in 1980 that it was superseded by Ricklefs' work (Ricklefs 1990). Legge's Sukarno biography was published in 1972, shortly after the ex-president's death, and was reprinted in 1985. Legge had a remarkable career as a scholar, coming to represent in person Monash's ties with Cornell (Chandler and Ricklefs 1986). Though he published on Australian history, in particular on Australia's colonial policy in Eastern New Guinea, still in the early fifties, his interest took a decisive turn in favour of Indonesia in 1956. Recent Indonesian history became his specialization, for which he did research both in Indonesia and at Cornell. The outcome of all this was a lasting interest in the links between the central, regional and local governments in modern Indonesia. Taking his Ph.D. at Cornell in 1961, he played a prominent part in and published regularly on the organization of Southeast Asian studies in Australia in the seventies. After spending many years as a manager, he returned to the subject of Indonesian independence with the publication in 1988 of a book on the political support of Sutan Sjahrir. His skills as a manager and his publications cast him in the same pioneering role with respect to Australia as Kahin with regard to the United States, except that the quality of Legge's scholarly work has never been called into question.

Australia in the seventies and eighties witnessed a boom in historical output as regards both scope and diversity, which was difficult for any other country to match. Well-known Australian Indonesianists in the seventies were Rex Mortimer and, more especially, Anthony J.S. Reid, who came from New Zealand. Mortimer published on Indonesian communism under Sukarno (Mortimer 1974), while Reid, who is currently affiliated with the ANU in Canberra, produced a number of historical works on social change in Northern Sumatra in the period from the Aceh war to the short-lived Republik Sumatera in the fifties. Thus he was one of the first authors to break with the Java-centric trend in historical studies. The main theme of his research at the time was the social revolution of 1945, as witness his important work *The blood of the people* (Reid 1979), though he also concentrated on the Japanese occupation and the Indonesian national revolution (Reid 1980).⁵

Other Indonesia specialists who should be mentioned here are Susan

⁵ Recently Reid has greatly extended both the period and scope of his specialization, as is testified by his two-volume monograph on Southeast Asia (Reid 1988-1993) and by his important contribution to a new international project designed to revise traditional Western ideas about how Asian monarchies reacted to European expansion on a comparative basis (Reid 1994).

Abeyasekere and John E. Ingleson, with their work on pre-war Indonesian nationalism (Abeyasekere 1976; Ingleson 1979, 1986), as well as Michael van Langenberg and C.L.M. Penders. Van Langenberg published on North and East Sumatra during the decolonization process (Van Langenberg 1976), while Penders, who together with Ulf Sundhaussen published a biography of General Nasution, edited a series of English translations of Indonesian documents and memoirs, among them the memoirs of Ali Sastroamidjojo (Penders 1979). In the eighties the stream of publications swelled even further. It is significant, however, that virtually no Australian scholars contributed to the international debate on the impact of the Indonesian revolution on the plantation economies of Sumatra and Java in which the Dutch, Americans and Indonesians were engaged. Instead, an increasing specialization was observable. Richard Chauvel fixed on the Ambonese islands before, during and after the Japanese occupation as his object of study (Chauvel 1990), and Ulf Sundhaussen worked on the Indonesian armed forces, investigating their structure, political role and impact on Indonesian society (Sundhaussen 1982). Interest in the social-revolutionary nature of decolonization survived, as is demonstrated by Anthony E. Lucas' interesting book on the situation in North Central Java in October-November 1945 (Lucas 1980). Lucas also retained an interest in the anti-Japanese resistance in Java during the Second World War.

An active writer of the younger generation is Robert B. Cribb. He became interested in Indonesian history at an early stage, and has been producing articles or conference papers almost annually ever since the completion of his Ph.D. thesis (at SOAS, London). His particular interest is with the less visible aspects of the Indonesian struggle for independence, and he has made detailed investigations of the situation in Jakarta after the Dutch had temporarily re-established their authority in the city, for instance, or of the resources which enabled the Indonesians to finance their war effort against the Dutch. He is particularly interested in the two-faced picture presented by Batavia/Jakarta during the Dutch presence, with on the one hand all sorts of Indonesian institutions and groups in the city co-operating with the Dutch (the subject of his Ph.D. thesis), and on the other all kinds of underground groups resisting the Dutch (the subject of his most recent book) (Cribb 1984; 1991). Other studies by him deal with the power vacuum arising in Indonesia after August 1945 and with the issue of money, a measure that had serious political implications.

No survey, however brief, should overlook the noteworthy historical output of the James Cook University in Townsville, Queensland, one of the new universities, established around 1970. Associated with this university is the name of Bob Hering and the journal *Kabar Seberang Sulating Maphilindo* of which he is the editor. Up to now, more than twenty issues of this have appeared, oriented mainly towards the Malay language area. Hering has covered a wide range of subjects, varying from Sukarno's early

political activities and the position of the Indonesian-born Chinese in Indonesia to the role of the PKI and Islam (Hering 1979). Hering was active as editor of the South-East Asian Monograph Series as well. The PKI and Islam were among the favourite subjects at James Cook, as is evident from Peter Edman's work on D.N. Aidit, leader of the PKI after 1950, and Peter Burns' monograph on the complicated relationship between Islam and the official Indonesian Pancasila ideology (Edman 1987; Burns 1981). Paul Webb's study on the small Christian political parties and the vicissitudes of the Christian churches in the Lesser Sunda Islands was also published at Townsville, as was Oey Hong Lee's often-quoted monograph on the international context of the Indonesian war of independence (Webb 1978; Oey Hong Lee 1981).

In conclusion of this section, one final remark should be made. For a number of years Australian-Indonesian political relations have been troubled by mutual irritation and distrust. An experienced 'Australia watcher', Zainu'ddin, who in 1956 was the first Indonesian guest lecturer ever to visit Australia, later joined in the complaints from Jakarta that Australian public opinion, fed by the media, was marked by anti-Indonesian feeling. This had to do with the way in which Indonesian politics operated, and more in particular with the occupation and annexation of East Timor, leading to the killing of five Australian reporters. Zainu'ddin's disappointment is easy to understand, for, despite the long-standing concern of the Australian government to promote the study of the language and culture of Indonesia, and notwithstanding the efforts of Zainu'ddin himself and his Australian wife, who wrote a short history of Indonesia for specific educational purposes (Thomson Zainu'ddin 1975), an insurmountable barrier between the two countries seemed to remain in place. Australian historians, however, have effectively crossed that barrier.⁶

3. Europe

Stepping across from the United States and Australia to Europe, Indonesian studies presents a somewhat different picture. It is, after all, the imperialist and colonial past of Great Britain, Germany and France that generated the Oriental societies, studies and periodicals which sprang up in this field, and in which the emphasis was first and foremost on language. A School of Oriental and African Studies, a *Handbuch der Orientalistik* and an *École des Langues Orientales*, testifying to these origins, still exist today, even though modern historical studies are a far cry from the early traditions. Even so, it will be useful for the reader to keep in mind one particular feature of the old school of Oriental studies, namely the links with the colonial empires of the respective countries in which these studies

⁶ There still seems to be a certain hesitancy with regard to Indonesian studies in Australia; see several university reports ('What ails ...?' 1990).

originated and blossomed. These traditions seem to have thrived until as late as after the Second World War, at least in Great Britain and France.

a. Great Britain

Before the Second World War, British Oriental research was concentrated mainly on India and China, the principal foci of British overseas imperial interests. Hardly any attention was given to the Southeast Asian area. An exception was formed by the work of J.S. Furnivall, who did research on the colonial policies of Burma and the Netherlands Indies in 1938 and 1939 respectively and after the war presented his findings and conclusions in a comparative study of both countries (Furnivall 1948). It was not therefore the Indonesian struggle for independence which led him to focus on this subject, as it did his American and Australian counterparts, but a need in top British colonial circles for a comparison of the various systems of colonial rule. This was not unusual at the time. Comparisons of the French and Belgian colonial systems with that of Dutch overseas rule had been made as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. They testified to a need for knowledge about and a willingness to learn from the experiences of other countries before the various governments introduced what they called policies of progress and development in their respective colonies, which in the Dutch colonial tradition has come to be known as the 'ethical policy'.

After the loss of their political, strategic and economic dominance first in China, as a consequence of the Japanese occupation since 1937, and later in India, following this country's independence in 1947, the British concentrated their attention on Malaysia. In the academic field this process was reflected by a growing interest in the universities of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, as well as in the last Chinese outpost, Hongkong. The Scarborough Report of 1946 was to exercise a decisive influence on post-war developments. Although the report recognized the general pre-eminence of the Americans in the Far East, it strongly advocated an unambiguous, permanent British presence in the area. This report played a special role in stimulating teaching and research with respect to Southeast Asia in Britain. In due course, that is, after publication of the Hayter Report in 1961, Southeast Asian studies were introduced in three British universities: the University of London, where the well-known School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) was located, the University of Hull, and the University of Kent in Canterbury. Multidisciplinary programmes were added to the existing curricula here, which did not in all cases prove to be a good step. SOAS distinguished itself by placing the emphasis on the study of languages – thus continuing in the old Orientalistic tradition – while the other two universities created ample room for the social sciences. Here American influence made itself felt. However, to state that Hull and Kent assumed first place in all the social sciences would be incorrect, as Oxford, Cambridge and the London School of Economics preserved their

well-established reputations in anthropology and economics (Bassett 1981; Smith 1986; Carey 1986b).

The British contribution to historiography, in particular with respect to Indonesia, under the new system was modest in both size and scope. Since D.G.E. Hall's ambitious monographs in the 1960s, the specific merit of which was that they assigned a special place to Indonesian history (Hall 1961, 1968), there have been a few good recent general surveys of European decolonization (Chamberlain 1985; Holland 1985). Furthermore, the bulk of this historiographical output is concerned not so much with Indonesian history proper as with the British involvement in it. This applies to the nineteenth century as well as to the period after the Second World War, in particular the first phase of the Indonesian war of independence, when British-Indian troops of Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Command found themselves caught up in the struggle against the Indonesians. This subject has been explored by Thorne in his work on Allied relations and war aims (Thorne 1986, 1988), as well as by Drummond (1979), Squire (1979), Buckley (1979), and Dennis (1987). Moreover, in contrast to Indonesia in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Boxer's studies on the VOC period, and Peter Carey's publications on the Java war), contemporary Indonesian history has hardly received attention from British scholars. Leslie Palmier, who published on Islam in independent Indonesia, on Sukarno and on Indonesian-Dutch relations in the 1950s, was an early exception to this rule (Palmier 1954, 1962). Bastin a little after this published a review of British sources for modern Indonesian history (Bastin 1965). Leifer wrote on Indonesian foreign policy since 1945, finding features explaining Indonesia's later policy of non-alignment in this early period (Leifer 1983). Carey drew attention to the anomalous position of Yogyakarta between 1946 and 1949, when the city functioned simultaneously as the residence of the traditional sultans and as that of the revolutionary government of the Republik Indonesia, some years ago in the journal *Indonesia Circle* (Carey 1986a).

Indonesia Circle, the periodical edited by SOAS since July 1973, deserves special mention here. Aimed at first at a small circle of Indonesia specialists, who were apt to find university news, announcements of appointments, conference papers, and so on, in its pages, it came in time to devote more space to scholarly contributions. However, the journal was never a match for the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (the successor of the *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, which was published in Singapore), as far as the quality of its contributions was concerned.

All in all, British interest in the twentieth-century history of Indonesia has been limited, due to a historically preconditioned situation. With a few exceptions, British historians have left the field to their Dutch colleagues, as they left the field of Indochina to the French and that of the Philippines to the Americans. The introduction of more training facilities in the sixties did stimulate interest in Indonesia, but the emphasis was on British

involvement with Indonesia rather than on Indonesian history per se. A recent review of Indonesian studies in Britain states that interest in the subject today is still limited, save in anthropology (Watson 1990). Except at SOAS, the British system does not give priority to language training, which the report considers to be the main reason why British research is unable to compete with that in America and Australia.

b. Germany

In Germany the situation is slightly different. As early as 1966 two important books on recent Indonesian history appeared here independently of one another: Bernhard Dahm's biography of Sukarno and the history of decolonization by the Swiss historian Rudolf von Albertini. This latter is a comprehensive standard work including a large section on Indonesia (Dahm 1966; Albertini 1966). Dahm followed up his biography with an English-language history of Indonesia in the twentieth century (Dahm 1971). His publications as well as his organizational activities on behalf of Southeast Asian studies put him on a par with the Australian scholar John Legge. Dahm was appointed to the first chair of Southeast Asian studies ('Südostasienkunde') at the University of Passau in 1984. His career mirrors the gradual development of these studies at West German universities. In West Germany there were ample opportunities for studying the Southeast Asian area, but the field was divided both in a disciplinary and in a geographical sense. Institutions offering courses in Asian languages were present in Hamburg, Cologne and Frankfurt, development sociology was taught at Bielefeld, anthropology at Tübingen, and geography in Giessen, Bochum and Kassel. Passau was the first university to introduce a multidisciplinary studies programme, though history occupied a dominant position. Here the influence of Dahm, who himself had studied with Karl Erdmann, a distinguished historian at Kiel university, made itself felt. Erdmann had exerted himself to try and convince West German universities of the importance of the study of overseas history already in the fifties. It is therefore not at all surprising that at Passau today the focus of Southeast Asian studies should be on language (Indonesian, Thai and Vietnamese) and on the significance of cultural traditions for modern development (Dahm 1975, 1991).

The growing interest in the Far East in West Germany after the Second World War had much to do with the influence of the Institut für Asienkunde in Hamburg. Set up in 1956 on the joint initiative of the Bundestag (Parliament) and the Auswärtige Amt (Foreign Office), it was intended to provide the necessary academic backup for West Germany's increasing relations with the People's Republic of China (*Das Institut* 1990). There had been very important political, commercial, financial and military relations with China before and after the First World War, until Hitler's alliance with Japan in the thirties had led to a complete severance of these. It was therefore no coincidence that the Auswärtige Amt was prominently

present in the Institut right from the start and that its first director was a former envoy to China. It looked as if the 'Chinese' in the *Auswärtige Amt* had taken revenge on the 'Japanese'! The Institut was charged with the task of providing the government and the business world with all the documentation they required and of editing a variety of publications on current political, economic and social affairs in China. Later its scope was widened to include Japan, Korea and Southeast Asia as well. Historiography benefited from the spin-offs of the Institut's activities, such as the publication facilities provided by the 'Schriften' (Monographs) and 'Mitteilungen' (Communications) series. It was here that Dahm's book on Sukarno and several other historical studies, as well as a few bibliographies, were published (Dahm 1974; Somers Heidhues 1983; Reinknecht 1983).

So far, German historiographical output with regard to Indonesia has been modest. Publications include some good surveys, such as the above-mentioned *Handbuch der Orientalistik* and a recent essay by Dahm (Kähler 1977; Dahm 1990). In addition, various other subjects have been covered. So there are monographs on Mohammad Hatta (Siebeck 1978), on the Indonesian army as a political agent (Nöbel 1975), and on Islamic mystical fraternities (Kraus 1990), as well as on pre-war Indonesian trade unions as anti-colonial organizations (Schaarschmidt-Kohl 1987). The former German Democratic Republic (DDR) has contributed with essays – Marxist-inspired, of course – on the relations between India and Indonesia during the Indonesian war of independence and on the activities of the Masjumi party in the same period (Weber 1988; Fritz 1986).

c. France

Finally, the situation in France should be examined. Surveys have been published by three French Indonesia specialists: by Denys Lombard and Christian Pelras, both of which appeared, apparently independently of one another, in the late 1970s, and by Jacques Leclerc, which came out in 1990. There is a curious difference between these three reviews. The first two are quite optimistic in tone and evince some satisfaction at the achievements so far, as regards both publications and organizational structures (Lombard 1981; Pelras 1978). Leclerc, on the other hand, lists only a few basic data and concludes with the laconic remark that Indonesia does not seem to exist in French culture after all (Leclerc 1990). That the situation could have deteriorated so badly in only a few years is not very likely, and the difference in tone is probably best explained by the respective positions of the writers. Lombard and Pelras were both working at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* (EHESS), and had to establish and defend their field of specialization in the midst of strong competition, while Leclerc, operating from the researcher's heaven that is the *Centre National de Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS), could permit himself a more distant view of the subject. Or perhaps the difference is simply attributable to a difference in temperament.

Even before the introduction of Oriental studies at the universities in 1930, language tuition had become the hallmark of the French system. The Malay and Javanese languages were taught at the École des Langues Orientales before they were in the Netherlands. From this École and a number of other institutions the present Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales emanated. Besides this institute, the important centre of agricultural studies at Montpellier, which has specializations in tropical agriculture and forestry, offers courses in Asian studies in these fields. For a long time, French students showed little interest in Indonesia. Just as in the case of Vietnam in the United States, this had to do with military and political developments in Indochina, whence France was obliged to withdraw in the fifties, leading to a general aversion to the area in France. A modest change took place somewhere around 1970. At that time, Lombard started teaching at the École des Hautes Études, where Indonesian studies had found their way into the anthropology curriculum, in which field Pelras was active. A core group of mainly social scientists sprang up, while a second group of Indonesia specialists formed around the periodical *Archipel*, to be mentioned further down.

Up until now, French historiography on modern Indonesia is anything but impressive, the journal *Archipel* excepted. Leclerc, himself a left-wing sociologist who did not hesitate in 1984 to accuse the Indonesian government of trying to destroy the country's leftist forces for a second time by eliminating them from Indonesian history, has published a great deal, by preference on Indonesian communism (Leclerc 1979). Françoise Cayrac, furthermore, published a study on the PKI (Cayrac-Blanchard 1973). The *Archipel* circle put out a volume of essays on the official Pancasila ideology and on the political debates which this doctrine has provoked in Indonesia (Bonneff et al. 1980). Moreover, Lombard's recent three-volume work on the range of traditional Javanese power should be mentioned (Lombard 1990).⁷

Archipel is by far the most important regular French publication in the field, appearing in two issues a year. Neither British nor German Indonesian studies can boast a comparable periodical, which itself states its focus to be: 'Études interdisciplinaires sur le monde insulindien'. Launched under the auspices of EHESS by Pierre Labrousse, Lombard and Pelras in 1971, the journal was financially supported by CNRS and the Institut National. An important decision in 1979 to accept English-language contributions for publication as well as French ones widened the appeal of the periodical. This decision clearly reflected the editors' desire to link up with international scholarship in this field of research. Over the years, *Archipel* has published a considerable number of historical essays on a wide range

⁷ Actually, Lombard is director of the École Française d'Extrême Orient in Paris; for this institute see the IIAS (International Institute for Asian Studies, at Leiden) *Newsletter* 2, 1994:9.

of subjects. These subjects include women's history (*Archipel* 13 (1977):23-36); Pontianak (28 (1984):77-97); the Arab community at Pekalongan (30 (1985):95-119); Islam in general (29 (1985):35-52); Aceh in 1945-1946 (30 (1985):207-17); and the oil industry (33 (1987):117-42). It is no exaggeration to say that *Archipel* is well on its way to becoming the European equivalent of the American periodical *Indonesia*.

Summarizing the above, we can observe first of all that the 'discovery' of Indonesia in Western historiography received its first impetus from the personal affinities of a number of authors with the country – such as involvement in the Indonesian war of independence and/or strong sympathies with the Indonesian cause. Here the names of Kahin, Benda, Anderson, Legge and Dahm suggest themselves. The establishment and subsequent development of Southeast Asian studies were at the same time made possible by financial support from governments or government-connected institutions in the five countries reviewed. This support enabled the social sciences to provide a new perspective from which to approach these studies, the traditional Oriental studies being too insignificant in scale and scope to meet the need for up-to-date information on and analysis of contemporary developments and bearing too strong an imprint of the colonial past. The United States, and in particular Cornell University, played a pioneering role. More or less everywhere the American multidisciplinary area studies approach was adopted. This approach has clearly enriched the study of Indonesian history. On the other hand, however, history made headway as an independent discipline by venturing into fields other than the old research areas of the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, the Indonesian war of independence, and decolonization in general. As a consequence of this wider focus a much clearer picture of, for instance, the late colonial state in Indonesia has emerged. Western historiography of Indonesia continues to point up the need for studying Indonesian languages. It is, after all, to a large extent to their linguistic proficiency that American and Australian Indonesia specialists owe their position as leaders in the field. Only by these means can the 'discovery' of Indonesia be properly sustained.

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