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The Domestication of Culture Nation-building and Ethnic Diversity in Indonesia

All the present states of Southeast Asia have one characteristic in common: not one of them is based on a homogeneous cultural tradition.¹ In all these countries, members of different ethnic groups, having their own languages and their own cultural heritage, live within the national borders. Often other members of these groups are found in neighbouring countries as well. In some states one group is clearly dominant and is confronted by a number of numerically and spatially marginal peoples. This is true, for instance, of Thailand, with its contrast between the Thai proper and the members of the various hill tribes whose area extends into the adjacent countries. In other cases, two large ethnic groups balance each other, such as the Malays and the Chinese in Malaysia. In the Philippines, by contrast, a large number of linguistically related ethnic groups live side by side, without any one of them holding a pre-eminent position. But whatever the constellation, all these countries share the same problem: what keeps the different groups together; what turns the state into a nation?

Such a situation is of course by no means specific to Southeast Asia. According to an overview by the Indonesian anthropologist Koentjaraningrat (1993:3), the world now contains just a handful of countries that are more or less ethnically homogeneous. And the fact that ethnic diversity can threaten national unity even in a modern state is more acute today than ever. If in the early sixties the opinion prevailed that expressions of cultural diversity were increasingly doomed to vanish in the melting pot of a 'global village', today such catchwords as Basque, Catalan, Flemish and Franco-Canadian should suffice to show the outdatedness of such an assumption. And the leaders of these separatist movements can by no means be dismissed as conservative folklorists; they are politically committed and appeal to young groups of adherents.

However, all these examples relate to newly aroused ethnic resistance to states with a long national history. In most Southeast Asian countries the situation is different. They emerged from colonialism and inherited

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boundaries that were imposed from outside. In the colonial era, unity was ensured by external pressure. In that situation, internal ethnic diversity was no cause for concern; on the contrary, such diversity could serve as a welcome instrument in the endeavour to play off indigenous anticolonial movements against each other and, in that way, to render them harmless. In many Southeast Asian countries, moreover, the administration could make use of a specific historical feature: even in precolonial times these areas had forms of national organization with a centralist government.

In the first years after decolonization, communal pride in having achieved and often fought vigorously for independence could give rise to a feeling of togetherness that seemed to guarantee a national future. But once the euphoria died down and economic and political problems had to be solved, the fragility of this monocausal enthusiasm suddenly became apparent. Contradictions flared up and crystallized – quite opposite to the expectations inspired by the theories of the melting pot and the global village – precisely along those lines that had been regarded as being doomed to extinction: old ethnic affiliations gained new importance and were expressed in revitalized traditional forms. A gap began to open between the political elite, which tried to maintain and strengthen the idea of national unity, and the different local groups whose confidence in a common state became more and more overshadowed by attachments to the familiar inherited community. In this process, awareness of ethnic relatedness to neighbouring groups outside the national territory could develop into a direct threat to the future of the political boundaries.

Theories of ethnicity

Opinions differed, however, as to possible reasons for this phenomenon, which, after Glazer and Moynihan (1963), was soon to be labelled 'ethnicity'. Clifford Geertz (1973:277) offered a psychological explanation: 'The power of the "givens" of place, tongue, blood, looks and way-of-life to shape an individual's notion of who, at the bottom, he is and with whom, indissolubly, he belongs is rooted in the nonracial foundations of personality'. The fact that such ethnic 'primordial attachments' continue to be maintained through all processes of modernization corresponds to a natural emotional need for social self-assertion. In the new and barely consolidated states of the Third World, however, these attachments form a potential danger, as they threaten to undermine national solidarity. Since Geertz regards them as an innate phenomenon, he sees only one solution. It makes no sense to wish the reality of primordial attachments out of existence. The only realistic reaction consists in contriving to 'domesticate' them.

The weakness of this 'primordialistic' theory lies exactly in the presumption of automatism. It is certainly true that 'in a world of growing

impersonality, ethnicity provides an immediate and often unconscious fellowship of identity and community' (R. Cohen 1994:62). However, ethnic attachments by no means become manifest everywhere and with equal intensity and exclusivity. Even if the assumption of the development of a 'global village' has not been validated, there can be no doubt that in many cases the attractiveness of taking part in a world-culture based on mass communication across all boundaries causes any urge to emphasize ethnic manifestations to fade away. Where such manifestations do appear, on the other hand, they do not simply indicate an emotional and indiscriminate clinging to familiar traditions. Certain forms are disappearing, while others are being accentuated in a way that makes it clear that their selection is combined with the attribution of new and powerful meanings. This makes our inquiry into the causes of ethnicity shift in another direction: What circumstances are responsible for the actualization of ethnic attachments?

From the numerous authors who have dealt with this question,² a few shared conclusions can be derived. First it emerges that ethnicity can be expected to appear wherever self-aware local communities believing they possess specific cultural traditions are interacting in a larger social context and where, moreover, modern, rapidly changing conditions and increasing external communication facilitate the perception of potential alternatives to the traditional group attachments. If political or economic interests are at stake in such cases, participants will try to demarcate and describe the group to which they belong and from which, traditionally, they expect support, through an ethnic accentuation and redefinition of specific cultural features. It is precisely this accentuation of boundaries that is typical. It reflects not just a psychological need for security but rather the pursuit of real interests.

However, even this 'instrumentalistic' argumentation cannot entirely dispense with the assumption of psychological motives. Indeed, from an objective point of view emphasis on one's own group is by no means always a rational solution. Distinct individuals within one group may have divergent personal aims and goals, and ethnic differences between groups are not synonymous with oppositions in interest. If interest serves as the chief determinant of behaviour, a coalition with individuals sharing the same aspirations in neighbouring groups would be a more logical answer than the appeal to the collectivity of one's own community (Epstein 1978:94).

In order to understand the ethnic reactions to the problems in the new states, a compromise between both theoretical positions, primordialistic or instrumentalistic, suggests itself. In many instances, the familiar ethnic community represents the most reliable and accessible social category for each individual, the first choice, as it were, in the search for support for

² Barth 1969; A. Cohen 1974; Glazer and Moynihan 1975; Koentjaraningrat 1993; see also the survey in Eriksen 1993.

personal aspirations. This 'primordial' choice, however, has to prove its worth continuously at least to such a degree that its emotional advantages can withstand occasional disappointments and failures. Only then can the traditional bond with one's group of origin maintain its pre-eminence, across all internal differences, in the interrelationship with other ethnic groups.

Under such circumstances each group will do everything to underscore the proven ethnic frame. Contrary to the primordialistic view, this process does not mean an automatic resumption of what is considered to be traditional. Those cultural representations (whatever their original significance) that are felt to express the identity of the community most convincingly and obviously will receive particular emphasis. They emerge in a process of selection, alteration and redefinition. The resulting 'marks of cultural distinctness' – Barth's famous although rather deprecatingly termed 'cultural stuff' – in this way become forceful ethnic symbols (Barth 1969:15; Brass 1985:17; Schefold 1988a).

It should be added that ethnic forms of attachment do not represent an exclusive category. After all, in the complex situation among the new states, ethnicity is but one of the potential manifestations of socio-cultural diversity (Liddle 1970:16). Religious affiliations or regionally shared ways of life can take the place of ethnic bonds, and such ties can reach beyond the national context as well. I shall briefly return to this point when dealing with possible relationships between group loyalties and tendencies towards globalization.

The problem for Southeast Asian states should by now have become clear. Their multi-ethnic composition, the abolition of the external unifying power structure, the greater confidence in local rather than national support, the possibility of alliances across the borders – all this demands a new legitimation of the state. It requires the activation of a national consciousness.

The cultures of Indonesia

In this article I examine the dialectics between Ethnicity and Nationalism through the example of Indonesia. At first I shall go into some of the country's cultural peculiarities, and then describe the growth of nationalist ideas in the years before and during the struggle for independence. Subsequently, the developments during the postcolonial period will make it possible to recognize various ways to deal with these dialectics; the varying treatments of what are in fact rather marginal tribal cultures will be held up as an illustration.

The ethnic situation in Indonesia provides a new variant of the examples mentioned at the outset of this article. Hildred Geertz (1967:24) distinguishes over three hundred cultures with more than two hundred

languages; these estimates, however, do not include the complex situation in Irian Jaya. Nevertheless, if viewed from the origins, the population forms a unity similar to that of the Philippines. With the exception of some regions in the eastern provinces, all the languages of Indonesia belong to one linguistic group, the Austronesian language family. The speakers of these languages immigrated to the Archipelago more than 5,000 years ago, probably from Taiwan. They possessed a Neolithic culture, traces of which can still be encountered today in the traditions of all Indonesian peoples. Contacts with the Southeast Asian continent some two and a half millennia later brought about more complex, Bronze Age conditions; these too spread over most of the islands of the Archipelago. Each individual culture did of course develop in its own way under specific local and historical influences, but Ancient Indonesia definitely cannot be denied a certain homogeneity.

This was to change in historical times with the impact of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, which reached the world of the Indonesian islands from various sources, especially as a result of the spice trade. These influences are among the major causes of the great cultural diversity which is so apparent to everyone travelling through Indonesia. Many areas were affected only superficially, with old tribal structures remaining intact. Examples are simple agricultural societies in the interior of large islands: the Batak on Sumatra, the Dayak on Kalimantan or the Toraja on Sulawesi. Much the same applies to the peoples on several smaller, remote islands on the edges of the Archipelago, such as the Mentawaians or the Niasans in the west and the inhabitants of numerous regions in the Moluccas in the east. In many coastal areas and on Java and Bali, by contrast, kingdoms of various sizes were founded such as those that have survived until recently on Bali. In other regions Islam prevailed; some communities, such as the Minangkabau Malays in western Sumatra, converted to Islam without first having gone through a clear Hindu-Buddhist stage. All these facts make Indonesia, in the words of the Dutch anthropologist J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong (1935), an ideal 'ethnological field of study', a diverse area with so much historical homogeneity that intercultural research can assume a fundamental relatedness and local variants can be studied as transformations and compared with one another to mutual advantage.

Whereas the prehistoric situation resembles the conditions we sketched for the Philippines at the outset of this article, historical developments gradually led to a situation that was more reminiscent of Thailand. The first kingdom in the Archipelago to secure a major sphere of influence was the Buddhist, trade-oriented Srivijaya in eastern Sumatra after the seventh century. Other important kingdoms, especially those on Java and Bali, were based on agriculture; these were strongly influenced by Hinduism, which was evident in their world-view and in the refined lifestyle of their elite. Around the middle of the fourteenth century, the empire of

Majapahit reached its greatest power; from its fertile base in Java, this kingdom controlled all interinsular commercial traffic in the Archipelago and even beyond, from settlements on the coasts of the Southeast Asian continent to western New Guinea.

The pre-eminence of Java as the island with the best developed infrastructure and the greatest density of population survived long after Majapahit had ceased to exist and the kingdom had disintegrated into smaller units. At this time, however, new centres began to form on the coasts, especially in western Indonesia; these centres specialized in trade and were strongly oriented towards Islam. In the course of this development, the influence of one west Indonesian people spread throughout the Archipelago: the Malays.

The Dutch era, first under the United East Indies Company and later as the colony of the Dutch East Indies, was initially concentrated on Java. Beyond that, in the outer regions, there were only a few bases for trade. Not until the turn of this century did the entire territory of the colony fall under Dutch administrative control. The native rulers, after some initial resistance, were deprived of more and more of their power and made dependent on Dutch allowances. With the exception of the Javanese elite the population had very limited access to the higher levels of western education. And yet it was in these very elite circles that the call for national emancipation first made itself heard.

Nationalist currents in colonial times

One personality, whom I will use as a representative example, was the Javanese aristocrat Soewardi Soerjaningrat (Poeze 1986; Ricklefs 1981). He was a founding member of the Indische Partij (Indies Party), which was established in 1912 and immediately banned in the following year, a party which pursued independence for Indonesia under joint Indo-European and Indonesian government. He was banished to the Netherlands during the First World War, where he came into contact with many other Indonesian nationalists living there voluntarily or involuntarily, and soon he became well known for his publications and lectures. After his return to Indonesia, he founded a system of education under the name of Taman Siswa ('Garden of Pupils') with a range of schools independent of the government in which the national heritage was to be cultivated and developed into the basis of a new national character. Although general Archipelago-wide issues were also taught, the emphasis lay clearly on Javanese traditions.

Criticism of the Javanese orientation of nationalist ideas came from Islamic quarters. The Muhammadiyah, again an originally Javanese foundation, linked nationalist thinking to a call for a national conversion to a reformed Islam. When the Second World War broke out, this move

ment had several hundred divisions, with schools, hospitals, and other institutions from Sumatra to Kalimantan.

More politically radical was the Sarekat Islam movement (Islamic Union), which alternated between fundamentalism and socialism in its endeavour to achieve national independence. In Holland it was the left-wing parties that could most be counted on to sympathize with the idea of Indonesian independence, and socialist ideas were present in all nationalist groups in Indonesia (Van Niel 1967:296).

It is interesting to examine how all these different nationalist movements confronted Indonesia's ethnic problem, namely the multiplicity of small and middle-sized groups facing the one dominant apex – Java. The point must immediately be made, however, that at that time the numerous traditional tribal societies hardly played any role in the discussion. For the colonial government, it was enough to know that they were under control. It was clear that they should be 'civilized', but there was no specific programme for them. Apart from customs that were subject to criminal law, such as headhunting, it was largely left to the local administrative officials to decide how extensively to intervene in traditional lifestyles with 'civilizing' measures (Persoon 1994:48). For the Indonesian nationalists these groups were in effect a negligible quantity. What counted were the dozen-odd large and hierarchically organized peoples with an Islamic, Hindu-Buddhist or sometimes even Christian affiliation. On Java that meant the Javanese and the Sundanese, on Sumatra the Acehnese and the Minangkabau, on Sulawesi the Buginese and the Minahasans, the inhabitants of Bali, and the like. Their nationalist representatives appealed to scholarly recognition of the relatedness of the Indonesian languages within the Austronesian family and considered themselves the legal heirs to the great kingdoms of Srivijaya and Majapahit (Leirissa 1995:109).

The cautious approach to the need for a national language was symptomatic of the problem. In the Dutch East Indies, Javanese was the language spoken by far and away most people. This language has several different vocabularies that are used according to the status of the person addressed, which makes it particularly difficult to learn. But the nationalists had another argument for not choosing Javanese as the national language: doing so would further accentuate what was already a serious concern, the preponderance of the Javanese sector of the populace, who made up almost half the entire population of Indonesia. This could deter the other peoples from participating in a union. An alternative was available in the Malay language. Although the Malay portion of the population was rather small, their language had become a *lingua franca* in large parts of the Archipelago as a consequence of their strong involvement with trade, and therefore was no longer exclusively associated with any particular region. By choosing Malay, the Indonesians could gain a

language of their own without affecting the balance between the various parts of the population. As early as the period of the First World War, Malay was being used at nationalist political meetings. During a Pan-Indonesian youth convention in 1928, Malay was declared the new national language as part of an affirmation of the unity of fatherland, nation and language, to be known by the – ethnically neutral – name Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language) (Johns 1967:413).

At more or less the same time Sukarno, a Javanese, and Mohammad Hatta, a Minangkabau Malay, each founded an anticolonial national party. This led to the internment of both notables, which lasted until the Japanese invasion. The Japanese, with their general prohibition of the Dutch language, contributed to the further development of Bahasa Indonesia, but disappointed expectations that political independence would quickly be recognized. In the summer of 1945, shortly before the Japanese capitulation, a group of leading nationalists drew up a constitution and formulated the Pancasila, the five principles of a national ideology which expressed, according to its author Sukarno, authentic pan-Indonesian values; its formulations continue to be used to the present day. On 17 August of the same year, Sukarno and Hatta declared independence. Four years later, after many battles, Indonesia's independence was officially recognized by the Netherlands.

In the 1945 constitution and the attendant official clarification, the aim of national unity was linked to a call for the promotion of a national culture in which the character of the entire Indonesian people was to be expressed (Yampolski 1995). Traditional regional forms were not to be disregarded: indeed they were, as we saw above, seen as historically interconnected in their origins. On the contrary, the local 'peaks' (*puncak*) were to furnish the shared basis, provided, as was stressed at the same time, they were advanced in such a fashion as to be able to represent a unifying asset for the new nation. They were to be supplemented by new and even foreign elements. It was not further explained where these peaks were to be found or what the advancement should look like. As we shall see, this was interpreted in very different ways in later years.

Post-independence problems: the case of Minahasa

The form adopted by the new state that was officially established in 1949 was a construct in which the Netherlands believed that its interests were best guaranteed: that of a federation of sixteen states in the framework of a loose Dutch-Indonesian union. But it quickly became apparent that the young nation was not viable in this form. During the years of the revolution, the inner frictions in the Archipelago had been muted in the joint struggle for independence. Now, however, the economic and administrative problems began to pile up, and ethnically-based regional and

religious conflicts led to local uprisings in western Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and the Moluccas. In reaction, the federation was transformed in 1950 into a unitary state, the Republic of Indonesia. But even after this change was made, there was a series of internal disputes with separatist tendencies that were extremely threatening for the future of the state. The form taken by these disputes confirms the general reflections presented at the outset of this article. Whether Islamic or Christian in orientation, they all ran along ethnic lines and were all connected in their distrust of the dominant position of the Javanese sector of the population.

As an example, let us consider the group of Minahasan tribes in northern Sulawesi (see Leirissa, Nas, Schefold and Schouten, all 1995). The Minahasans inhabit a volcanic area of some 5,000 square kilometres, one of Indonesia's most fertile regions. Originally they were organized into independent and fairly autonomous territorial communities based on kinship, all tracing their descent from a common mythical pair of ancestors. A statue of this couple stands in the centre of Manado, the most important modern city in Minahasa, symbolizing the ethnic unity of the people. The Minahasans have always been regarded as very bellicose. Individual competition was of great significance in their culture, expressed in a hierarchical series of increasingly lavish rivalry-based festivities as well as in headhunts. Competitions bestowed influence and prestige upon successful individuals, but in the Minahasans' view the interests of the entire community also benefited.

The early decades of the nineteenth century saw radical changes in these traditions under the influence of the colonial government and Protestant missionaries. Initially these changes met with strong resistance, but in mid-century there came a sudden reversal. The population that had been dismissed as 'heathen' converted in droves to Christianity and to a large extent adapted their external forms of life to the Dutch lifestyle. They turned to growing cash crops and thereby experienced a considerable economic upturn. Many Minahasans entered the service of the colonial army. All these developments led to Minahasa ultimately being nicknamed the 'twelfth province of the Netherlands'. Nevertheless, the Minahasans also managed to preserve some fundamental characteristics of their traditional culture. The specific pattern of their old way of life, with its emphasis on individual achievement and competition in a framework of collective interest, can still be recognized today. This fact contributes decisively to the Minahasans' self-awareness as a people with a strong ethnic identity.

Regarding this self-awareness, two movements may be distinguished in the years prior to independence. One was chiefly oriented to strengthening ethnic identity by pursuing a united organization for Minahasan auxiliaries, most of whom were stationed in Java in the service of the colonial government and army. A consequence of this was the foundation of a

Minahasan Council, which was supported by the government. The other movement, led by G.S.S.J. Ratulangie, joined forces with the nationalist groups and strove to have their organization, the Persatuan Minahasa (Minahasan Union), incorporated into the national uprising. Here too, however, it was never questioned that the desire to preserve the specificity of the Minahasan contribution was entirely legitimate.

Ratulangie was also involved in the preparation of the Indonesian declaration of independence. It was partly because of his influence that the idea of ensuring Islam a special role in Indonesia was dropped – in view of the various religious denominations in Indonesia this would have been a fatal burden for the young republic. During the revolution many Minahasans fought side by side with Indonesian nationalists. After this, however, they were brought down to earth as economic and political problems accumulated. The Minahasans felt that the development of their region was being neglected to the benefit of Java, and they began publicly to demand more autonomy.

Developments at national level added fuel to this fire. President Sukarno began to assume increasingly more power. Desiring to emasculate the political parties with the help of the army under the slogan 'Guided Democracy', he alienated even the honest and cool-headed democrat Hatta. As a Minangkabau Malay, Hatta in effect formed a periphery-based counterbalance to the dreaded Javanese dominance (although he did not stress this himself, it should be pointed out; see Cribb and Brown 1995:72). Hatta resigned in 1956. In 1958 the struggle for a new polity led to a state of affairs bordering on civil war in Sumatra and Sulawesi. Padang and Manado, the biggest cities of Minangkabau and Minahasa, were bombed by government troops. This resulted in a kind of armistice. But it was not until changes were brought about in the late sixties under Soeharto's presidency that a fresh start could be made.

Sukarno and national culture

If we consider Sukarno's political measures on behalf of nation-building from a cultural point of view, we are struck by the fact that he as a Javanese did not really know what to do about the ethnic multiplicity of Indonesia. His old friend and collaborator on the preparations for the first constitution, the abovementioned Soewardi Soerjaningrat (who in the meantime had adopted the name Ki Hadjar Dewantara) stressed in the early fifties that the national culture should only adopt and develop such regional achievements as express a national spirit; other elements should not be supported (Yampolski 1995:704). This clearly reflects Indonesia's negative experiences of federal structures and of the centrifugal tendencies of ethnic loyalties. Sukarno himself was primarily concerned with the significance of national values and goals. He even advocated the active

suppression of particular ethnic characteristics, as we shall see presently.

The most important and certainly the most successful means of promoting national values was the energetic improvement of the school system, which had been far from spectacular under Dutch rule. Naturally the new system was based on the Indonesian language; it had the same structure throughout Indonesia, and even the uniform, which was identical for all schoolchildren, asserted unity. In the political sphere, important steps included the elimination of residues of Dutch participation in economic life and the successful handling of the complex issue of New Guinea (western New Guinea was ultimately released by the Dutch after considerable international pressure was applied). Another fail-safe stratagem was the creation of a new national enemy through the implementation of a confrontational policy towards Malaysia. The multi-party system of the early years had always been associated with particular ethnic bases, but during the Guided Democracy period, which began in 1956, functional groups gained special importance at the national level. In the following years Sukarno laid increasing emphasis on a national ideology, which became visible in monuments and lavish state rituals; he stressed such pan-Indonesian values as mutual assistance and unanimous agreement through patient consultation, and propagated the cultivation of a national personality that excluded decadent western influences (Feith 1967:366-70). Undeniably, much of this ideology was rooted in Sukarno's Javanese past. This is something he may scarcely be reproached for, yet it is all too understandable that beyond the island of Java this aspect of the Guided Democracy period caused new tensions (Liddle 1970:214-6).

The cultural traditions of the great Islamic, Hindu and Christian sectors of the population were not directly affected by these processes. There was no room for them in the state rituals, with their propagation of national achievements. The many traditional leaders from local aristocratic families who had collaborated with the Dutch and had received their support as counterforces to the nationalist aspirations were relieved of their political roles. From time to time Sukarno proclaimed himself an advocate of mixed marriages, and in so doing he liked to point to his own descent from Balinese ancestors through his mother (Dahm 1964:36). Old transmigration (resettlement) programmes from colonial times designed to alleviate overpopulation on the islands of Java and Bali were given additional importance in the hope that they would contribute to national integration. Sukarno's ideal was an utterly new culture, purified of the old feudal traditions and liberated from its specific ethnic roots (Liddle 1970:224; Ramstedt 1994:213). At least initially, however, there was no question of any active limitation of peaceful ethnic expressions; the development of traditional artistic forms, for which a pan-Indonesian role was foreseen, was even stimulated.

Only the descendants of Chinese immigrants formed an exception in this

regard, as they continue to do today (see on the following Cribb and Brown 1995; Koentjaraningrat 1975; Skinner 1967). Their numbers are currently estimated at some four million. Because of their origins, they are neither ethnically nor linguistically homogeneous, and they differ widely in the degree to which they are assimilated into the local Indonesian population. In the early part of this century, under colonial rule, the Chinese enjoyed a privileged status: they were Chinese citizens, but were legally regarded as Dutch subjects. Chinese entrepreneurs played an important part as middlemen in the trade between the European and the indigenous populations. They were scarcely involved in the Indonesian struggle for independence, yet they managed to maintain their strong position in the economy of the republic. These two facts made them vulnerable to the reproach that they were exclusively concerned with their own advantage. As a consequence there were periodic, sometimes bloody reprisals. Chinese who had neglected to obtain Indonesian citizenship were for a time required to leave the rural areas and settle in the cities. To this day, all inhabitants of Chinese descent are under heavy pressure to give up their ethnic traditions and assimilate.

The 'isolated society' of the tribal cultures

A special case is the multitude of peoples who had not been affected by the influence of the great religions and who have hitherto been mentioned only in passing. These are the traditional tribal societies whose members in Indonesia are estimated to number well over a million today. It was on these politically defenceless groups that the efforts towards national cultural standardization were concentrated. Significantly, they came in the course of time to be characterized collectively as *masyarakat terasing*, 'isolated society'. This expression indicates how their special position was interpreted: this was a category of ethnic groups whose isolation cut them off from the mainstream of social development and who had therefore remained backward (Persoon 1994). As a result, they were incapable of recognizing how primitive and wretched their self-sufficient way of life really was. It was the government's task to make this clear to them and to guide them to a more modern form of existence. From the outset, responsibility for them was given to the Ministry of Social Affairs.

When I first arrived on the Mentawai islands to the west of Sumatra in 1967 to do fieldwork, the methods of this policy of change were distinctly recognizable. The Mentawaians are one of the most archaic groups in Indonesia, in many ways displaying the Stone Age heritage of the ancient Austronesian immigrants (Schefold 1988b). In nineteenth-century descriptions they were frequently idealized as 'amiable savages', a name inspired as much by the impression of a simple and harmonious way of life as by their exotic appearance with loincloths, floral decorations and richly

patterned tattoos. In the early twentieth century the islands fell under the influence of the Dutch colonial administration. The traditional headhunt was strictly forbidden and the payment of a modest poll tax was required; otherwise there was little interference in their way of life.

This was to change in the Sukarno era. The Mentawaians hardly corresponded to the image of the national Indonesian personality, and everything was undertaken to adapt them to it as soon as possible. In 1954 a decree was promulgated prohibiting their traditional religion, which was said to be heathen; all the inhabitants were given three months to decide whether they wanted to convert to Christianity or to Islam. Anyone who did not choose within this period was threatened with punishment by the police or by mission teachers, and his ritual equipment was burned. Coupled with this were governmental measures to turn the longhouses that lay at irregular intervals along the rivers into tidy, surveyable villages with a church and a school. At the same time, external features such as glass-beaded jewelry, the long hair of the men, loincloths, tattoos and the custom of chiselling the incisors to a point were forbidden as marks of un-Indonesian primitiveness.

All the accessible *masyarakat terasing* groups in Indonesia were affected by measures of this kind. The administrative apparatus was, however, not everywhere efficient enough to achieve the desired radical success. In some parts of Mentawai, traditional communities were able to preserve their way of life until the more liberal conditions arose which I shall come to presently. Yet there is no doubt that the negative evaluation of ethnic identity, engendered by the feeling that it was a potential threat to national unity, had a devastating effect on the *masyarakat terasing* groups. Cultural expressions which could very well have adapted from within to modern circumstances were suddenly cut off and lost for ever.

Contempt for the traditions of the *masyarakat terasing* groups was typical of Sukarno's progress-oriented attitude in matters of the national culture. Strictly speaking, it would have been the obvious step to seek in those very traditions the indigenous basis for the unity of the entire Indonesian people. However, from Sukarno's perspective, the association of these traditions with old-fashioned 'feudal' or 'tribalist' structures was more essential. And this is probably also the explanation for the deprecatory view of their isolated position. A comparison with the official definition of the 'Indigenous Cultural Communities' (ICC) in the Philippines is instructive in this regard. There the same phenomenon is given a positive turn: the historical differentiation of the ICC from the majority of the Filipinos is seen as a sign of their successful resistance to the political, social and cultural inroads of colonization (Dante M. Aquino, personal communication).

In the 'New Order' that came about after President Soeharto's assumption of office, there was at first little change in attitude towards the small

ethnic communities. Their different lifestyle, branded as backward, continued to strike the government as unworthy of a modern state. One particular argument supporting that view was initially the idea that such weakly organized societies could easily fall prey to communist thinking. Programmes were formulated to improve them intellectually and economically and to enable them to join modern Indonesian society (Persoon 1994:69). A special directorate was founded to develop and benefit the isolated tribal communities. This directorate, as well as the Ministry of Forestry and other authorities, set up projects and resettlement programmes throughout the tribal areas so that these goals could be attained. Only a few years ago, a government plan to transmigrate Javanese bachelors from their overpopulated island to Mentawai was backed up with the argument that the resultant interaction and foreseeable mixed marriages would help uplift this undeveloped indigenous people. However, the Mentawaians had since become more experienced in dealing with the authorities. They had founded their own regional organization, whose furious reaction certainly contributed to the fate of those plans, which were quickly shelved.

At the same time, however, in certain areas there were also signs of increasing tolerance. The first of the five principles of the Indonesian national ideology, the Pancasila, declares the belief in an almighty divinity to be an inalienable characteristic of all Indonesians. Alongside Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism and Buddhism, the Hinduism of the Balinese is also one of the five religions (the so-called *agama*) which are recognized on this basis. Purely local beliefs, the *kepercayaan*, are, by contrast, not considered to be religions. As a result the bearers of the animist tribal traditions are registered in accordance with the development-oriented thinking as *belum beragama*, or 'not yet in possession of a religion'. Consequently, they do not have their own department in the Ministry of Religion (Persoon 1994:111). It is up to the five official religions to convert the areligious peoples to an *agama* and thereby to lead them to the fulfilment of one of the duties of every Indonesian citizen.

Since the late sixties, however, a few large tribal religions have managed to present themselves as a variant of Hinduism and thereby achieve official recognition after all. This has been true of the Toraja in Sulawesi, certain Dayak groups in Kalimantan and the Karo Batak in Sumatra. In fact some Sanskrit words occur in the mythical traditions of all these peoples, words that testify to a Hindu influence, albeit usually a rather superficial one. These three tribal religions, together with the Hindu-Balinese, have been united in one group under the banner of Hindu-Dharma anchored in a joint training centre in Denpasar, Bali. It remains to be seen to what extent they will be able to retain their specific identity or whether syncretistic tendencies towards standardization will prevail.

A few other tribal religions have also applied as candidates for Hindu-

Dharma, but negotiations have not yet been concluded. The most serious issue will probably turn out to be the decision on the position of the numerous Javanese mystic movements, the *aliran kebatinan*, which have adherents right up to the highest government circles but have hitherto been classified merely as *kepercayaan*, as beliefs, and have only received attention in the Ministry of Culture. The strongest opposition to their official recognition comes from the ranks of the representatives of orthodox Islam. However, if a simple 'belief' here succeeds for the first time in achieving legal status, this could have wide-ranging consequences for the tribal religions.

Soeharto's 'New Order'

There are signs that just such a development is truly in the offing. The reasons for this are complex and lead us back to our original questions. During the Sukarno era it had become evident how dangerous ethnic attachments can be for the state. Tolerating expressions of regional cultures had been unavoidable when required for political peace, yet this had been countered by increasing emphasis on common national achievements. Finally, however, the Sukarno government itself became a victim of claims to absolute power from various movements. Sukarno's attempt, against the will of the army, to combine nationalist, Islamist and communist forces and to play them off against each other failed. This led to the attempted putsch by the communist party and ended in the victory of the military leaders.

President Soeharto's 'New Order' (Orde Baru) was designed to find ways of restoring the threatened unity. At first forced integration still seemed the best option as far as the tribal communities were concerned, particularly in view of their alleged susceptibility to communist ideas. After the bloody repression of the putsch, however, communism soon ceased to constitute a present danger. In this regard, the 'New Order' state could consider itself consolidated. What was now becoming more threatening to internal peace was the claim to predominance of another force on the national level, fundamentalist Islam. As a counterweight, traditional Indonesian pluralism suddenly appeared in a new, more attractive light. One consequence of this reorientation has been a greater tolerance of non-official religions. This automatically means more openness to other phenomena in the cultures at issue. Yet it is clear that this new orientation creates a dilemma: as a result of greater tolerance, ethnic attachments may be re-energized, and their danger has by no means been forgotten. What is the position of the national culture under Soeharto?

Ethnic diversity and national culture

The New Order's solution to this dilemma is strongly reminiscent of Clifford Geertz's formulation cited in the section on theories of ethnicity at the beginning of this article. It is senseless to wish ethnic attachments out of existence. The appropriate reaction for a nation consists in 'domesticating' them. One idea that has played an important role in related discussions in Indonesia in recent years refers to the situation-dependent character of all group attachments, also mentioned in the theoretical section above (Koentjaraningrat 1986, 1993). These attachments arise in specific circumstances and may be differently demarcated and nuanced for each individual according to the context. Even in persons with ethnically strong roots, social identity therefore need not be limited to the ethnic component. Other social fields of reference may take priority depending on the circumstances.

The task of the state consists in ensuring a place for itself in these fields of reference which is unassailable and decisive in all public matters. The opposition of ethnic and national attachments is then no longer a problem of rival loyalties but of giving expression (in a manner appropriate to the needs of the state) to the fact that each individual operates in different contexts. It is only natural that all tasks that are connected with traditional expressions of the community and that give the individual a sense of security and 'roots', are assigned to the domain of the immediate ethnic environment. For the fulfilment of the other aspirations, it is the state that assumes responsibility. The state must prevent people from becoming confined in intra-ethnic relations and must seek to establish a national identity such that as a matter of course all solutions to general economic and social problems are sought at state level and every citizen, in solidarity, embraces the cause of the development of the country.

For the national elite, ideas like these were by no means new. It was from their circles that the declaration of independence had emanated. As a group, this elite consisted of representatives of various ethnic origins; for each one of them, the composition of their most reliable band of followers often had an ethnic slant. Nevertheless the objectives of the members of this elite were oriented to the state as a whole. If they did not want to close off their access to a broader base, they were obliged to keep their individual ethnic attachments somewhat within limits. Many of them therefore declined official positions in those ethnic organizations which for many years, especially in the big cities, have brought together immigrants from the same region. On the other hand, they liked being honorary members; perhaps this was a typical compromise between public aspirations and primordial attachments (Persoon 1986:188).

In the melting pot of the large cities, whose share of the population has shot up since independence, one might expect similar tendencies. Research shows, however, that despite the mixed habitation, ethnic identity,

drawing borders against other people and attachment to the area of origin are still central issues in the lives of immigrants. And this is even more true of the large sector of the population living in rural areas. Other than applying force, there is only one way of counteracting fragmentation: increasing the credibility of the pan-Indonesian component within the national culture.

However, in contrast to the Sukarno period, this component is now no longer seen as the sole legitimate frame of reference for Indonesian ethnic groups (see Koentjaraningrat 1993). Today, the pan-Indonesian component regards its task as formulating, collating and developing up-to-date cultural elements in those domains that apply to social issues within the framework of the state as a whole. Such common elements may be of foreign origin. There is, however, an increasing tendency, even for pan-Indonesian concerns, to prefer a derivation from available ethnic roots (that is, ultimately autochthonous Indonesian ones) (Sellato 1993). The only requirement is that these roots should free themselves of outdated archaic traits and allow themselves to be adapted to the spirit of the national ideology. Suwati Kertiwa (1994:VIII), director of the National Museum of Indonesia, formulates this with utter clarity: the elements of traditional culture that deserve to survive are those which 'exemplify the uniqueness of our people'; other items, by contrast, 'truly do not need to be preserved any longer'.

In this tendency, the official clarification attendant on the constitution of 1945 has gained new currency. The state as a nation legitimizes itself through the 'imagination' that its inhabitants, of whatever class, represent a solid cultural community (see Anderson 1993). The starting point of this ideological construction is a political entity; the character of the construction itself, however, closely resembles the features of ethnic identity formation mentioned at the outset of this article (see Eriksen 1993:100).

The problem remains, of course, that the pan-Indonesian component of the national culture cannot rely on the obviousness of primordial attachments that are so typical of small-scale ethnic groups. The task therefore consists in creating an equivalent for such attachments without getting into conflicts with ethnic loyalties. This logically leads to a revaluation of everything that has been achieved jointly in the Indonesian setting. The traditional glorification of Srivijaya and Majapahit and of the political and artistic achievements of those eras, the history of the struggle for independence and its heroes – including at least one representative of each province if at all possible – the national ideology of Pancasila, the advantages of a national language that is rooted in the people, the results of Indonesian development programmes, all this is now supplemented by an appeal for international recognition. Worldwide communications and the global propagation of particular values and achievements, such as great

technological, sporting and artistic feats, turn every Indonesian success into a national event. This shows that processes of globalization need not 'undermine' the state as a matter of course, as is occasionally assumed (Kloos 1995:122). Of course this is not to deny that there are examples in Indonesia in which this is actually the case; these will be discussed presently.

Obviously, the double-rooted motivation of Indonesian identity could only emerge in peaceful conditions in which the ethnic question was not attended by aggressive conflict. Under President Soeharto's New Order, this prerequisite was fulfilled more successfully than at any point since Indonesian independence. The government has utilized this situation in an astonishing manner by taking the initiative itself. With a view to 'domesticating' ethnicity, the authorities suddenly took the bull by the horns, as it were. Regional cultural expressions, instead of being merely tolerated, were given active support in a way that was designed to take the wind out of the sails of any adherents of separatist ideas. One important symptom of this policy (albeit a relatively marginal one politically speaking) was greater tolerance of tribal traditions. But what must be striking to anyone visiting Indonesia recently is the well-nigh patronizing tendency to champion everything that in the government's view gives positive expression to the cultural pluralism of the country. It is hardly surprising that this patronage is selective, reducing what are in fact ethnic way of life to folkloristic elements. Morality and political correctness are under control; the formal manifestations are adapted to the desire for tourist-friendly repetition and easy access (Yampolsky 1995). However, in this 'aestheticized' form (Acciaoli 1985), oriented as it is to outward spectacle, ethnic diversity does now appear as a central element of Indonesian identity. It is not opposed to the national culture, but is part of it, displaying its glittering riches.

Every evening, Indonesian television shows folk dances and other regional art forms. Government buildings in the provinces adopt formal elements from traditional local architecture. In all the provincial capitals museums are being set up to exhibit the cultural heritage of the region. One interesting detail is that each of these museums has its own Nusantara room, 'where visual comparisons are made between local artifacts and those from elsewhere in Indonesia, [...] with the implication that, for all its variations, Indonesia is one' (Taylor 1994:79). Perhaps the clearest expression of the idea of cultural diversity as a national phenomenon is Taman Mini in Jakarta, an open-air museum with more or less faithfully reconstructed examples of house forms from the entire Archipelago. The message is clear: ethnic diversity is ultimately also a component of the national culture; it is anchored in the heart of the nation, in the 'mother city' (*ibu kota*), as the Indonesians refer to their capital.

The motto 'Let's go Archipelago' of *Visit Indonesia Year 1991* expressed

the very same line of thinking (Sellato 1993). No longer are Java and Bali the only pre-ordained destinations. The riches of Indonesia are expressed through its archipelagic diversity. However, 'riches' in this context can very well also be taken literally. The fact that the marginal cultures within the plurality of Indonesia are also attractive to tourists is certainly not an unwelcome concomitant of the new tolerance. Nowadays several ships sail every week to the Mentawai Islands, which until recently had been very difficult to reach. There the tourist can meet tattooed shamans in loincloths performing ceremonies in full view of the public – something that would still have been punished in the seventies. During the day, the children of these shamans wear their school uniforms and learn about the goals of the national development programmes. Double identity is not an easy business.

To what extent the folkloristic domestication of ethnicity will stand the test of time is hard to predict. It represents a *rapprochement* in externals, in form. In this way people will be less likely to recognize the fact that all the decisive questions of public life have been removed from ethnic responsibility and have been entrusted to the state. The artifice, one might say, of double identity consists in its partly referring to different domains: to a cultural domain, with both its ethnic and its national components, but with only the national component relevant to a normative and political domain as well.

It remains to be seen how much strain this imbalance can take. An aggravation of economic problems or regional-chauvinistic blunders made by political leaders could rekindle the ethnic fires which seem currently to have been checked behind the multiform folkloristic façade. In the extreme west and the extreme east, in Aceh and in Irian Jaya, dissatisfaction with the hegemonic claims of the distant central government has been finding expression in separatist campaigns. If in such cases ethnic minorities want to stand up for their rights, an appeal to global support (through the World Council for Indigenous Peoples, for instance) may open up new, international opportunities to promote their interests (Eriksen 1993:126; Kloos 1995:128). Opposition from other groupings, however, like the goals of fundamentalist Islamic groups, no longer has any clear ethnic base. Yet this example, too, indicates that global networks will be at least as important for the future of subnational communities as the uniting of regional forces.

To date President Soeharto has managed to curb all such endeavours. His successor will inherit a heavy responsibility in any case. In this sense, the Sanskrit motto on the Indonesian coat of arms sounds almost like an incantation: *Bhinneka tunggal ika*, 'Unity in Diversity'.

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