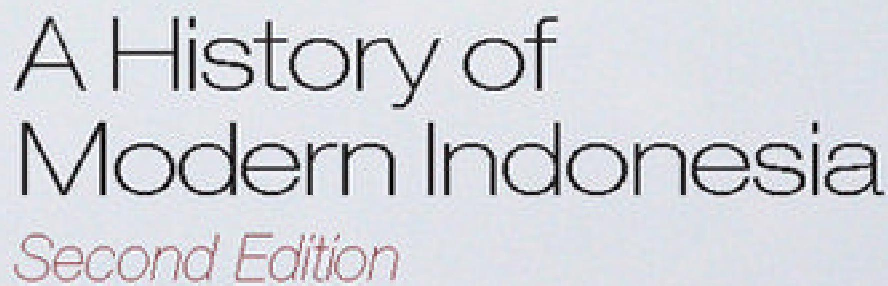

A History of Modern Indonesia

Second Edition

Adrian Vickers

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A HISTORY OF MODERN INDONESIA, SECOND EDITION

Since the Bali bombings of 2002 and the rise of political Islam, Indonesia has frequently occupied media headlines. Nevertheless, the history of the fourth-largest country on earth remains relatively unknown. Adrian Vickers's book, first published in 2005, traces the history of an island country, comprising some 240 million people, from the colonial period through revolution and independence to the present. Framed around the life story of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Indonesia's most famous and controversial novelist and playwright, the book journeys through the social and cultural mores of Indonesian society, focusing on the experiences of ordinary people. In this new edition, the author brings the story up to date, revisiting his argument as to why Indonesia has yet to realize its potential as a democratic country. He also examines the rise of fundamentalist Islam, which has haunted Indonesia since the fall of Suharto.

ADRIAN VICKERS is Professor of Southeast Asian Studies in the School of Languages and Cultures at the University of Sydney. He is the author of the acclaimed *Bali: A Paradise Created* (1989). In 2003 he curated the exhibition *Crossing Boundaries*, a major survey of modern Indonesian art, and he has also been involved in making documentary films, including *Done Bali* (1993).

A HISTORY OF MODERN INDONESIA

Second Edition

ADRIAN VICKERS

The University of Sydney

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A note on spelling, pronunciation and names

Indonesian has gone through several spelling systems, and there is great inconsistency in the public use of these systems. For the sake of simplicity I have generally used the spelling system introduced in 1972, although Pramoedya preferred the Dutch-era 'oe' instead of 'u' in the spelling of his name; likewise Dr Djelantik preferred the pre-1972 'dj' instead of 'j'.

Syllables in Indonesian words are generally pronounced with even weight; 'a' is pronounced like the English 'u' in 'up'; 'e' is usually pronounced as in the English word 'step' or like 'a' in 'day'; 'i' is pronounced as in 'hid'; 'u' is pronounced like 'o' in 'do'; 'c' is pronounced like the English 'ch'; 'sy' is pronounced 'sh'. Javanese is transcribed variably in the sources used; the 'a' is like the Danish 'a', and so is usually rendered as 'o', but inconsistently (e.g., 'Ronggowarsito').

Although many Indonesians have adopted the use of family names or surnames, there is a great deal of variation in personal names in Indonesia. Some people have only one name, such as Suharto and Sukarno. Many names also incorporate titles, such as the Sumatran aristocratic title 'Sutan' in Sutan Syahrir's name. It is quite common to change names at different stages in life, as when Suwardi Suryaningrat changed his name to Ki Hajar Dewantoro at the age of forty. Many people are known by abbreviated names for simplicity, as in the case of Abdurrahman Wahid, known as 'Gus Dur', which combines a Javanese familiar title, 'Gus' (short for Gusti but sometimes Agus or Bagus), and an abbreviation of his main name.

Chronology

1870	Beginning of a 'Liberal Policy' of deregulated exploitation of the Netherlands East Indies
1873	Beginning of the Aceh War
1888	Founding of the packet steamship line KPM
1890	World depression
1894	Lombok War
1898	General van Heutsz becomes chief-of-staff of the Aceh campaign
	Wilhelmina becomes queen of the Netherlands
1901	Ethical Policy proclaimed
1903	Aceh declared conquered
1904	Van Heutsz made governor general
1907	Raden Mas Tirto Adhi Suryo founds Civil Servants' Association, Sarekat Priyayi
1908	Budi Utomo proclaimed first official nationalist movement
	Last Balinese rulers to resist Dutch rule wiped out in a battle to the death
1911	Founding by Tirto Adhi Suryo of the Islamic Traders' League
1912	Islamic League (Sarekat Islam) becomes first mass-based nationalist party
1914	World War One; the Netherlands is a neutral country in the war
1917	East Indies trade with Europe cut off by the war
	Russian Revolution
1918	Death of Tirto Adhi Suryo
1920	Founding of the Communist Party of the Indies (PKI)
	Economic downturn
1925	Birth of Pramoedya Ananta Toer
	Sharp rise in world commodity prices brings prosperity to the Indies

1929	Great Depression
1930	Sukarno's famous nationalist speech, 'Indonesia Accuses', given as defence in his political trial
1940	Germany invades the Netherlands
1941	8 December (7 December in Hawaii), US naval base at Pearl Harbor bombed by Japanese
1942	Japan invades the Netherlands East Indies
1945	15 August, Japan surrenders
	17 August, Sukarno and Hatta proclaim Indonesia's independence, signalling the beginning of the Indonesian Revolution
	10 November, Battle of Surabaya
1946	Social revolutions, including Three Regions (Tiga Daerah) Revolt
	Republican capital established in Yogyakarta
	Federal states set up by Dutch in Outer Islands
1947	25 March, Linggajati agreement, first ceasefire
	20 July, First Police Action
1948	Abdication of Queen Wilhelmina
	19 January, Renville Agreement, Van Mook line established between Republican and Dutch territories
	August, fall of Amir Syarifuddin government
	18 September, Madiun Affair
	December, Second Police Action, fall of Yogyakarta to the Dutch, execution of Amir Syarifuddin by Republicans
1949	February, execution of Tan Malaka by Republican army
	1 August, official ceasefire
	December, Dutch forced to take part in Round Table Agreement
	27 December, Indonesia achieves full sovereignty
1950	Federal states dissolve and Indonesia becomes a unitary republic
	Korean War brings high prices for rubber and other Indonesian commodities
1955	First national elections
1956	PRRI–Permesta regional revolts
1957	State of war and siege declared, beginning of Guided Democracy
	Dutch enterprises nationalised
1962–3	Irian Jaya (West New Guinea) campaign

1963–5	Confrontation with Malaysia
1965	30th September Movement 'coup' (Gestapu) leads to the death of 500,000 to 1 million people identified as Communists
1966	Sukarno hands over power to Suharto through the 11 March Letter of Command (*Supersemar*), beginning of the New Order regime
1969	'Act of Free Choice' legitimises Indonesia's control over Irian Jaya
1970	Death of Sukarno
1971	First New Order election
1974	15 January upheavals (Malari) end the New Order's 'honeymoon' period
	Pertamina Affair
1975	Invasion of East Timor
1977	National election
	'Normalisation' of university campuses programme
1982	National election
1983	Mysterious Killings (Petrus)
1984	Tanjung Priok Affair involving killings of Muslims in Jakarta
	Clampdown on Islamic political leaders
1987	National election
1989	'Openness' campaign announced
	Establishment of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals' Association (ICMI)
1992	National election
1994	Press bans end 'Openness'
1996	Death of Tien Suharto
	Attack on Megawati's faction of the PDI
	Bre-X scandal (or Busang gold mine scandal)
1997	Asian financial crisis and drought
	National election
1998	21 May, fall of Suharto, replaced by B. J. Habibie
1999	Legislation to create Regional Autonomy
	National election
	Referendum leads to political violence and the independence of East Timor
	Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) becomes president
2001	Abdurrahman Wahid resigns
	Megawati Sukarnoputri becomes president

2004	National election followed by first direct presidential election
	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) becomes president
	26 December, tsunami
	Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and Indonesian government restart peace talks, leading to a peaceful settlement
2005	28 March, massive earthquake hits Sumatra
	15 August, signing of the Helsinki Accord ends Aceh dispute
2006	30 April, death of Pramoedya Ananta Toer
	27 May, massive earthquake hits Yogyakarta region, mud volcano at Sidoarjo begins on gas-drilling site
2008	27 January, death of Suharto
2009	SBY re-elected
	30 December, death of Gus Dur
2010	Earthquakes hit Sumatra

Introduction

Indonesia is the fourth-largest country in the world, with a population its government estimates at 240 million. It consists of 19,000 islands strung across the equator, some of these no more than sand spits, others, like Java and Sumatra, large and densely populated. Two of the world's largest islands, Borneo and New Guinea, are partly within Indonesia: Kalimantan is the Indonesian name for its part of Borneo, while Indonesia's half of New Guinea is now called Papua – formerly Irian Jaya. As a country joined by water, Indonesia covers an area as wide as Europe or the United States.

There are more than 200 major cultural and language groups on the islands. Java is the most populous island, with over 130 million people packed together on its 132,000 square kilometres. Jakarta, the national capital with a population of 15 million, is located on the island of Java. Javanese culture dominates the other cultures of Indonesia, but the main language of the nation is a form of Malay called Bahasa Indonesia or Indonesian.

Indonesia is generally featured in the world's media for its political violence and involvement in international terrorism. It has been rated at the top of international corruption watch lists, and its president between 1967 and 1998, Suharto, was named the head of state who extorted the most personal wealth from his country.

Such negative images do not do justice to the country. Indonesia is the world's third-largest democracy. It may have the largest Islamic population in the world, with 90 per cent of the population identifying itself as Muslim, but estimates of the number of those who are members of violent groups indicate that no more than several hundred would be willing to engage in terrorist violence. Indonesia is not an Islamic state, but rather has a long history of religious tolerance. Before many parts converted to Islam in the fifteenth century, Hinduism and Buddhism were the majority religions, and there are still significant minorities who adhere to these faiths. Chinese temples can be found throughout the archipelago, as can Protestant and

Catholic churches, and even synagogues. There are still many Indonesians who practise ancient forms of ancestor worship or animism, and these earlier spiritual beliefs pervade the observances of the larger religions.

The many religions of Indonesia are part of the cultural richness of this diverse country. Indonesia's famous shadow puppet theatre, the *wayang*, is an ancient art that combines Indian epic tales with indigenous mythology. Indonesia also developed some of the richest textile traditions in the world, the best known of which is *batik*, the art of wax-resist dyeing. Each part of Indonesia has its own wealth of music and theatre, visual arts, poetry and literature. This diversity and depth of Indonesian culture is a product of openness to new ideas and practices that have come to the islands via millennia of trade with India, China and the rest of the world, the same kind of openness that has embraced shopping malls, mobile phones and DVDs.

In political terms, Indonesia has turned, slowly and hesitatingly, towards democracy, as shown by the mass demonstrations that brought Suharto down. After more than thirty years of military-dominated dictatorship, Indonesians have entered the twenty-first century with a desire to clean up government and make it representative of the people. Indonesia has had far fewer political assassinations than the United States or India – no president has ever been killed. It is safer to walk the streets of major Indonesian cities at night than to walk through some of the inner parts of Sydney or Los Angeles.

Indonesia's historical experience explains its diversity, and why it is a country of paradoxes. Although in earlier times there were kingdoms that embraced large parts of the Indonesian archipelago, Indonesia did not come into existence as a country until the middle of the twentieth century. The physical boundaries of Indonesia were established by the Netherlands when the Dutch took over the many islands and made them a single colony: the Netherlands East Indies. Some parts of Indonesia were ruled by the Dutch for 300 years, others for less than 30. Dutch rule explains many aspects of Indonesia, because it provided administrative and economic foundations for the modern state. Legal systems, labour relations, urban development and many other aspects of present-day Indonesia were stamped by the Dutch.

Under the Dutch, Indonesians began to conceive of themselves as a nation. After the Japanese invaded Indonesia in 1942, that nascent nationalism evolved under the leadership of a small group of Indonesians into a struggle for independence: the Indonesian Revolution of 1945–9, led by Sukarno, Indonesia's first president. When sovereignty was transferred from

Dutch to Indonesian hands at the end of the Revolution, Indonesia became one of the new nations of the era of decolonisation. As a new nation it has struggled to balance the interests of different groups and maintain coherence against both the pressures of its own diversity and tensions created by international politics. The present state of Indonesia is as much a product of struggle and the use of force for political ends as it is the realisation of national identity.

Telling the history of modern Indonesia is difficult because a country as huge and heterogeneous as this does not have a single narrative. Most historical accounts have been concerned with the activities of a small group of political leaders, those who created the nationalist movement under the Dutch, led the country to independence and have fought amongst themselves to control it ever since. There have been official histories, which play up nationalism and unity in ways that paper over the cracks in the national edifice. These are usually histories of state heroes and big events, and do not say much about the experiences of ordinary Indonesians.

One of the few Indonesians with a coherent and developed vision of the nation's history was the country's most famous novelist, Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Of the 240 million individual stories that could be told about Indonesia, Pramoedya's links the world of politics with everyday life. Pramoedya was born in a small town in Java during the colonial era. His father and mother gave him a strong sense of nationalism and its importance, and in his writings he wrestled with the problems of Indonesia's national identity. Amongst those writings is a series of four novels about the formation of nationalism, *This Earth of Mankind*, and a series of semi-autobiographical stories about growing up on Java and experiencing Dutch rule, the Japanese invasion and the Indonesian Revolution.

The novels that make up *This Earth of Mankind* provide insights into how Dutch colonial society was riven by contradictions, especially between the desire to control Indonesians and the desire to bring them progress. In these books Pramoedya gives voice to the feeling that developed amongst Indonesians of becoming modern people, desiring emancipation and ultimately an independent nation. What Pramoedya's writings show is that ideas of progress, the modern and the nation are contested by different social groups, mirroring the physical struggles of Indonesian history.

This Earth of Mankind begins with the volume of the same name and portrays a naive young man, Minke. This character is based on the historical figure of Tirto Adhi Suryo, one of Indonesia's first nationalists. In this novel Minke struggles to rebel against his aristocratic Javanese traditions

and come to terms with the wonders of technology and enlightenment promised by the West. An important aspect of modernity brought out in Pramoedya's writings is that tradition becomes a self-conscious process of identifying the older facets of identity and emphasising them. Pramoedya, like other nationalists of his generation, rejects what they call 'feudalism' in tradition, the emphasis on hierarchy that links birth to power.

Pramoedya's novel presents Minke's growing awareness of living in a colonial culture of subjugation. Over this and the next two volumes, readers see through Minke's eyes the processes by which the Dutch took over the islands of Indonesia and exploited them economically, and the developments through which Filipinos, Chinese and other Asians came to form their own sense of national identity. The important elements these novels identify are the growing gulf among different ethnic and class groups in Indonesian society and the ways this gulf is emphasised by the colonial state, as well as the awareness of a need for emancipation that grows out of the frustrations of colonialism, emancipation that includes the struggle of women for recognition. Pramoedya gives a detailed impression of urban life and its relations to colonial modernity, and in the last novel shows how Indonesians became their own torturers under the colonial system, as illustrated by the figure of an Indonesian spy for the Dutch who is responsible for the death of Minke. I examine these facets of the experience of colonial rule in the first three chapters of the present volume by focusing on Pramoedya's identification with Tirto's life.

Pramoedya wrote his novels to convey how those of his parents' generation grew to become nationalists. His father, a nationalist teacher, was born in the same year as the fictional Minke, and through Minke, Pramoedya examines his father's frustrations as a nationalist left powerless by the efficiency of the Dutch suppression of indigenous politicians, a powerlessness that led him to gambling as an outlet for his stymied political desires.

Pramoedya moved to the city and worked as a journalist during the Japanese period. He was gaoled by the Dutch for supporting Indonesia's struggle for independence, then gaoled during the regime of President Sukarno for his outspoken support of Indonesia's Chinese minority. He described life in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, in a way that no other author has, by taking his readers into the backstreets and slums. As someone active in left-wing cultural politics, he was caught up in Indonesia's major upheaval, the purge of Communists that began in 1965 and led to the killing of at least 500,000 people. It was this purge that brought Sukarno's successor, Suharto, to power. Pramoedya was one of hundreds of thousands gaoled by Suharto's military-led government in the aftermath of the purge,

and he spent fourteen years in prison, most of those in harsh conditions on the remote prison-island of Buru, in Eastern Indonesia. There, when eventually given paper by his gaolers, he wrote *This Earth of Mankind.* Returning to Jakarta in 1979, he spent almost twenty more years under house arrest, his books banned. When Suharto fell, Pramoedya was free to become a public commentator and to publish again.

Other key prison writings by Pramoedya offer detailed insights into his personal experiences and the ways he incorporated them into his writings. His prison letters and articles, published as *A Mute's Soliloquy*, give a moving impression of what it was like to live through the colonial period, the Japanese occupation of Indonesia and the Revolution. He tells how he used his personal experiences as the basis of his early fiction – accounts of life in the countryside and the city which convey the sense of a struggle for survival in the face of unbearable suffering. Pramoedya's many novellas and short stories on the Revolution serve as more detailed guides to his formative experience of this struggle, and Chapters 4 and 5 of this book draw on them to connect the personal to the larger scheme of political and economic changes of these periods.

Pramoedya's writings echo his bitter life experiences, showing what so many millions of Indonesians went through as Indonesia turned from a parliamentary democracy to a semi-dictatorship under Sukarno and then to an authoritarian regime Suharto called his New Order. They evidence the cynicism that many Indonesians still feel about the promises of political leaders, beginning with the disillusionment that followed the Revolution of 1945–9 when it did not usher in the bright new world of prosperity that many people had hoped for. In his writings from the 1940s and 1950s Pramoedya conveyed the experience of daily life for people who live in grinding poverty at the whims of politicians. Fictional and non-fictional accounts merge in the clear realism of his prose. Chapters 5 and 6 trace this process up to the beginning of Pramoedya's long imprisonment. The experiences of imprisonment form a counterpoint to the prosperity that Suharto brought about in the nation, changes discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

Pramoedya's life and writings are a guide to understanding modern Indonesian history, an epic and highly serious vision of the story of Indonesia as a nationalist tragedy that began at the turn of the twentieth century and was betrayed by Suharto's New Order. Any history writing involves leaving out most of 'what happened', and by selecting a series of themes about culture and society, Pramoedya's writings provide an alternative historical agenda, one concerned with power and everyday experience. They

are also writings that are jaundiced, partial and partisan, elevating nationalism to the centre of Indonesian life, arguing that nationalism should be rooted in the people and that it should be a modern nationalism, to which most aspects of traditional culture are irrelevant. In this they differ from the works of some of his contemporaries, for example the novelists Umar Kayam (1932–2002) and Father W. S. Mangunwijaya (1929–99). Kayam was an author, actor, film-maker and academic who explored tradition as the basis of modern Indonesian culture, and in particular used the so-called feudal traditions of Central Java to find elements of value for Indonesians as a new people. One of the great contradictions of Indonesia is its dependence on ancient characteristics – temples such as Borobudur or royal traditions – to define a distinctive modern national personality. Mangunwijaya, a Javanese Catholic priest, engineer and writer, combined the *wayang* shadow play with a James Joyce style of modernism to criticise the moral corruption and materialism of his country.

Mangunwijaya wrote his novel *Durga Umayi* as a reply to *This Earth of Mankind*, depicting the country as the product of the tail end of colonial rule and of a struggle so full of contradiction that it is almost farcical. Mangunwijaya took on the ancient Javanese characterisation of the world as part of a mad age, where survival depends on coming to terms with contradiction.

All three authors tend to play down the importance of Islam to Indonesia, despite Indonesia's having the largest Muslim population of any country in the world. They viewed Islam as a religion of daily life, interwoven with the fabric of norms and social mores but resisted as a religion of state and nation at various levels, from the ecumenical formulations of the Constitution and national values to the practices of older forms of ancestor and spirit worship. This view made sense until the 1990s, when a surge of renewal increased the importance of displays of piety in daily life, resulting in what many Indonesians consider to be a Middle Eastern style of Islam. But a history of Muslim Indonesia would be a very different book from this one.

All three authors give a Java-centred view of Indonesia, whereas the other half of the population has its own set of somewhat centrifugal perceptions of the nation. Java, however, as well as being the seat of government, has been the centre of social and political developments since the early twentieth century, as Chapter 3 shows.

Writing a national history of Indonesia is difficult, because it is a nation still coming into being. The state of Indonesia was created first by the almost accidental set of colonial boundaries of the early twentieth century,

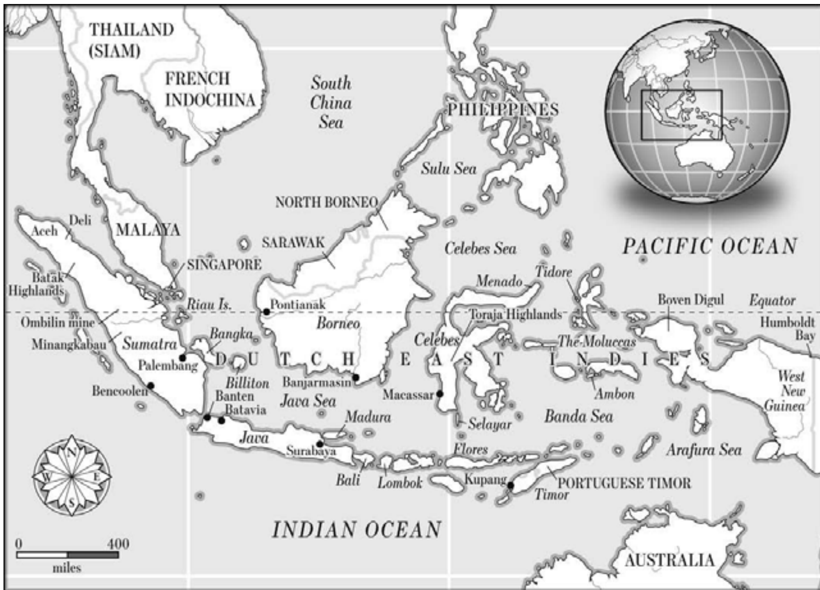
or at least this is the argument put forward by Pramoedya, since others claim that the state goes back to at least the thirteenth-century kingdom of Majapahit. The colonial state, based as it was in the Netherlands, did its best to deny Indonesians any sense of citizenship, let alone participation. This alienation has continued into the post-colonial period. The nation itself does not have a cohesive society, people still refer to their ethnicity as a primary point of self-description and successive leaders have done little to further the sense of a civic set of norms and institutions.

Still, Pramoedya's descriptions of life in the slums of Jakarta or in the prison camps on Buru are written in hope, a faith in humanity's struggle for a better life and a sense of what Indonesia might mean. In his fiction he tries to move outside himself to illuminate the lives of ordinary people under tragic circumstances. While his writings were still banned, Indonesians and foreigners alike savoured them as forbidden fruit, as they were part of the continuing dissent against the Suharto regime, dissent that ultimately contributed to the disintegration of that rule.

His works have also had an immense influence on the writing of foreign histories of Indonesia because they have provided an Indonesian perception of historical experience that is an alternative to the official view. Authors such as Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, whose cultural history has influenced the writing of this book, have shown how creative dialogue with Pramoedya and other Indonesian authors can help us to understand the myriad perceptions of Indonesian history.

During the Suharto era the discipline of history was heavily repressed and starved of its basic resources – access to archives and critical debate. In the post-Suharto era there has been a flood of books and articles in Indonesia that challenge earlier accepted histories, although many of these have been little more than attempts to counter New Order propaganda. The republication of Pramoedya's works has been one wave of this flood, contributing to a new kind of public debate which promises to revivify public history. The fall of Suharto had the paradoxical effect of allowing Pramoedya to return to being a major public intellectual, as he was in the 1950s and early 1960s, but at the same time creating new political agendas for Islam and ethnic struggle that were outside Pramoedya's vision of Indonesia. The waters have still to settle.

Indonesia is a place of tragedy and farce, of tradition and modernity. Umar Kayam's emphasis on traditional roots for a new nation answered the need for depth in a country uneasy with the modern. He and Mangunwijaya were both much more in touch than Pramoedya with the spiritual and religious interpretations that most Indonesians employ to make sense of



Map 1 The Netherlands East Indies, showing major islands and cities.

their lives. The tragedy of Indonesian history is its continued pattern of exploitation, lives lost and opportunities squandered. The farce is the surreal nature of a disjointed nation, but mixed with this is an enduring optimism that has enabled Indonesians to salvage a sense of shared purpose from their existence in a state created under foreign rule.

CHAPTER I

Our colonial soil

> Having spent myself the greatest and the best part of my life in the Dutch colonial service and having pawned my heart to the welfare of the Dutch East Indies and the people over there . . .
>
> Former Governor General Jonkheer Mr A. C. D. de Graeff[1]

Before 1945 there was no Indonesia, but rather a collection of islands spread across the equator that the Dutch made into the Netherlands East Indies. In 1898 a new queen, Wilhelmina, ascended the throne of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Wilhelmina's tropical empire, known simply as the Indies, numbered more than 28 million subjects on the prime island of Java and some 7 million others on what were referred to as the Outer Islands, although not all of these as yet were under Dutch rule.[2] Although she ruled for the rest of the colonial period, Wilhelmina never visited her colony. She never experienced the sudden monsoonal downpours, the green landscapes dominated by volcanoes or the spicy heat, but every year her birthday was celebrated there, with night markets and festive arches.

What was it like for the Dutch, ruling that vast archipelago of Indonesia? The Dutch made up a special, upper social class of the Indies – soldiers, administrators, managers, teachers, pioneers. They lived linked to, and yet separate from, their native subjects. From 1900 to 1942 these colonial rulers worked to make the islands a single, prosperous colony, and for that they expected gratitude. In 1945, when the Pacific War ended and the Dutch attempted to reassert their control over the islands of Indonesia, they were genuinely shocked that some of the peoples of their islands would fight to the death to keep them out. There was a vast gap between Dutch perceptions of their rule and the views of their Indonesian subjects, but it is important to understand the Dutch views, because they have shaped modern Indonesia.

CONQUERING THE INDIES

To create a modern colony Wilhelmina's loyal subjects had to complete a takeover begun when their ancestors founded the port city of Batavia – now Jakarta–on the northwest coast of the island of Java in 1619. It was significant for Indonesia's creation as an unplanned colony that it was founded on business, not Dutch national expansionism. These seventeenth-century Dutchmen set up this colony as investors in the world's first great multinational company, the United East India Company. Batavia became the centre of its Asian trading network.

Over the next 200 years, the Company acquired additional ports as trading bases and safeguarded its interests by gradually taking over surrounding territory. By 1800 the Company had been closed down, but the Dutch had achieved control over most of Java, parts of the larger island of Sumatra, the fabled eastern spice islands of Maluku (the Moluccas) and the hinterlands of various ports where they had established bases for themselves, such as Makasar on the island of Sulawesi (Celebes) and Kupang on the island of Timor.

By the end of the nineteenth century, steamships and the new Suez Canal made for shorter journey times from Europe and new attitudes towards expansion. Tiny Holland, nostalgic for its seventeenth-century greatness as a world trading power, joined in the competition for empire that had overtaken the mentality of Europe. Despite claims that the Dutch government had no policy of aggression, only one of 'reluctant imperialism',[3] from the 1870s onwards the Dutch fought a series of wars to enlarge and consolidate their possessions.

The Dutch venture into full-blown empire-building began with the strong and independent Muslim Sultanate of Aceh. Aceh, on the vast and promising island of Sumatra, was known until recently as a centre of bitter conflict and rebellion. Its name also dripped blood in the nineteenth century. The French, British and Dutch were all trying to consolidate their holdings in Southeast Asia and were interested in the natural wealth that Aceh had to offer, particularly pepper and oil. In 1873 the Dutch invaded Aceh, little realising that it would take thirty years to complete the takeover.

For a Dutch soldier watching the lush green shoreline as he sailed towards Aceh, it must have seemed as though the pending task was going to be very easy. Standing with him on the ship were troops from all over Europe whom the Dutch had signed up, men down on their luck or getting away from their pasts. In separate quarters on board were local soldiers from Java

and from Ambon, in the spice islands of Maluku. The colonial army had the latest repeating rifles and heavy artillery, while the Acehnese merely had spears and knives.

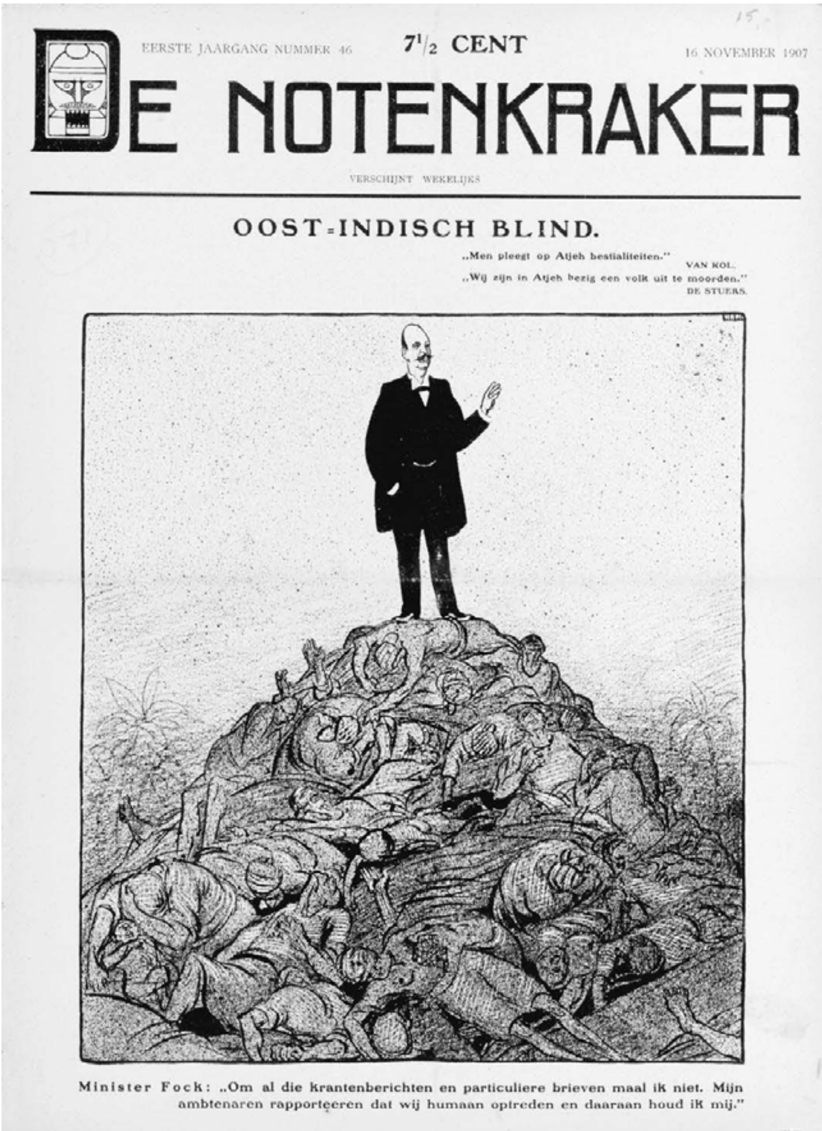
Despite the confidence of the Dutch invaders, the Acehnese almost won. Indies warfare was a nightmare. The Dutch were faced with resistance from local guerrilla fighters whom they could not distinguish from the rest of the Acehnese population. Acehnese guerrilla tactics involved setting traps, laying ambushes and launching surprise attacks near the barracks on soldiers who wandered off on their own. Every village harboured potential death. The ordinary European soldiers lived in fear and hatred, and they were reduced to levelling villages and killing women and children in an attempt to undermine an invisible enemy.

The generals running the campaign were heavily criticised by the Dutch public – the war was going on too long, was costing too much, and stories leaked out about the execution of prisoners and innocent civilians alike. Forced labour, torture and sadism were commonplace Dutch tactics. One set of photographs from the war showed colonial troops, dressed in black, standing amid villages where the Acehnese corpses formed a tightly packed, bloody carpet on the ground, interrupted by a single surviving child, crying. Dutch political cartoonists picked up this theme, commenting on the blind and immoral adherence to the colonial policy of successive political leaders (Figure 1.1). The Dutch government hid behind official denials and the fog of war propaganda.

A victory in the battle for public support came in 1894. On Lombok, the island to the east of Bali, reports emerged that Lombok's Hindu Balinese rulers were oppressing the local Muslim Sasak people. Sasak leaders appealed to the Dutch for help. The Dutch army moved in and, with relative ease, killed or captured most of the Balinese rulers, allowing the campaign to be presented to the public as a success. Lombok showed politicians and critics that there would be no repeat of the debacle that had seen the Dutch nearly defeated in Aceh. The resulting enthusiasm for conflict was echoed in one of the soldiers' songs:

> And to Lombok off we go
> And we are bored with peace
> So we'll shoot with powder and lead
> Those Balinesers dead.

However, the long-term results were not so good for the Sasaks. The Dutch forced the exportation of their rice, while taxing them heavily. After a few



EERSTE JAARGANG NUMMER 46 — $7^1/_2$ CENT — 16 NOVEMBER 1907

DE NOTENKRAKER

VERSCHIJNT WEKELIJKS

OOST-INDISCH BLIND.

„Men pleegt op Atjeh bestialiteiten." VAN KOL.
„Wij zijn in Atjeh bezig een volk uit te moorden." DE STUERS.

Minister Fock: „Om al die krantenberichten en particuliere brieven maal ik niet. Mijn ambtenaren rapporteeren dat wij humaan optreden en daaraan houd ik mij."

Figure 1.1 'East Indies Blind'. Minister (of the colonies) Fock: 'I have no time for all these newspapers and private correspondence. My officials report that we act humanely, and I'll stick to that.' *Nutcracker*, 1 (16 November 1907), commenting on the Aceh situation. Courtesy Leo Haks.

decades of Dutch rule, Lombok went from being a wealthy rice bowl to an impoverished and semi-desert island.[4]

The warrior General J. B. van Heutsz (1851–1924) finally solved the problem of Aceh. During a frustrating tour of duty there he met Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936), an academic who made a career of studying Islam. As his first major colonial assignment Snouck, a man who radiated presence and authority, was charged with obtaining inside information on the activities of Muslims from the Indies who lived in the Middle East or travelled there to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca. When his investigations revealed that Aceh was becoming an international rallying point for Muslims opposed to European colonialism, Snouck's response was to try to understand the social basis of Acehnese resistance. He discovered that the religious leaders played the key role in heading the Acehnese struggle and that there was a growing tension between these Muslim heads and the traditional Acehnese aristocracy. Snouck correctly advised the Dutch government to capitalise on this divergence by doing more to win over the Acehnese nobles.

Appointed chief-of-staff in Aceh in 1898, van Heutsz followed Snouck's advice: 'When one wishes to rule a country, to have one's will respected there, then one must establish oneself in that country.'[5] In this approach, respect was won by separating the Acehnese resistance fighters from their bases in the countryside and by strengthening the authority of the Acehnese rulers. At the suggestion of an Acehnese aristocrat, van Heutsz adopted some of the guerrilla tactics of the enemy by creating highly mobile units in the Dutch army. He combined their use with the superior firepower of the new repeating carbines until he had created a deadly scorched earth policy that saw 10,000 Acehnese flee to Malaya. As a result, the resistance lost its local supplies and support, and van Heutsz was made governor of an Aceh declared pacified in 1903. To give the appearance of peace, the European troops were kept to a minimal level of 12,000, but continuing popular resistance meant that 23,000 Indonesian soldiers, mainly from Java, Ambon and Manado in Sulawesi, over half of the entire colonial army, had to be in Aceh. The total cost of the war was *f* 400 million (US$160 million, equivalent to more than US$10 billion in present-day terms), 37,000 troops killed on the Dutch side and 60,000–70,000 Acehnese lives lost.

General van Heutsz's success in Aceh made him a popular hero of expansion, and his supporters were able to silence the voices of doubt and criticism in the Dutch parliament and newspapers. Van Heutsz's achievement was further recognised in 1904 by his elevation as Wilhelmina's governor general in the Indies. Monuments were later erected to him in Aceh, Batavia

and Amsterdam in the 1920s and 1930s, and a boulevard in Batavia was named after him.

Politicians and military leaders were able to claim they had a moral duty to free common people from oppression or backwardness. They said they had to punish or modernise independent indigenous rulers who practised slavery, ruled unjustly and did not respect international law. So the colonial army rolled through sultanates and small kingdoms in Sumatra, Maluku, Borneo, the Southeast Islands and Sulawesi between 1901 and 1910. Some rulers, such as the sultans of Tidore (Maluku), Pontianak (Kalimantan) and Palembang (Sumatra), wisely asked for Dutch protection from independent neighbours to avoid military conquest. By doing this they could negotiate better rights and conditions when they came within the colonial system.

Two expeditions were sent to conquer the rulers of South Bali. When one of the South Balinese kings let his subjects claim the contents of a ship under Dutch jurisdiction wrecked on his shores, the Dutch argued that international shipping rights had not been protected and consequently launched an invasion in 1906. The justification for a second action in 1908 was that Bali had become a major centre of opium smuggling. In both cases the results were appallingly spectacular. Rather than surrender their independence, the Balinese kings, queens, princes, princesses and their followers armed themselves with swords and spears to face the Dutch forces. Dressed in ceremonial white, they marched into a barrage of Dutch bullets and cannons where death was bloody, brutal and certain. More than 1,300 members of the ruling class and their servants died during these invasions, which the Balinese still speak about today.

By 1909 the Dutch had established an integrated territory. Many areas of the Indies were placed initially under military rule, which often amounted to establishing what one contemporary critic called dictatorships.[6] The final tidying up of the map occurred in the 1920s when the Dutch took full control over part of the island of New Guinea against the threat of expanding Australian interests.

ADMINISTERING THE EMPIRE

Local lords who survived the takeovers served well as the vehicles for a policy known as indirect rule. Under this system, the Dutch saw themselves as preserving tradition by providing a layer of wise administrators above the natural native leaders of the people. Traditional rulers became regents; the indigenous aristocracy became an indigenous civil service. They were placed under the hierarchy of Dutch officials: residents, assistant residents

and district officers. This indirect rule would not disturb the traditional life of the peasantry, and besides, it was cheap, since the Dutch did not have to re-create a state from the bottom up. In 1900 Queen Wilhelmina needed only 250 European and 1,500 indigenous civil servants, and of course her army, to rule 35 million colonial subjects.

Snouck Hurgronje's earlier successes as a colonial adviser on native affairs meant that he was able to influence the administration. He and his followers saw expert knowledge as the best way of providing 'vigorous but righteous colonial government'.[7] Snouck supported the development of Dutch bureaucrats expert in language, culture and local law, who, like him, would have special insights into the cultural motivations of local populations. After he left the Indies he went back to Leiden University, the colonial training centre, where he himself had been educated. Now, as a professor, he could lead the way in training his successors.

In the system Snouck supported, civil servants had to pass examinations, and fewer were promoted on the basis of family connections. Efficiency based on merit would make government run like a machine for the purpose of social engineering. Whereas colonial officials had once come exclusively from the aristocracy, by the early twentieth century they were increasingly from the upper bourgeoisie, and eventually from the middle and even working classes. During van Heutsz's period as governor general the first female colonial civil servant, Laura Ellinger, took her examination, although she never achieved high rank. The bureaucrats took their duty very seriously. They wanted to act on behalf of the peoples of the Indies, to protect them from the worst effects of modern life but, in contradictory fashion, to develop the Indies at the same time into a modern state.[8]

'Peace and order' was the stated aim of the administration, but it was an order obsessed with files and memos. Even Dutch observers thought this bureaucratic attitude extreme. One critic was the Netherlands' major novelist at the turn of the century, the flamboyant Louis Couperus (1863–1923). In his novel of colonial life, *The Hidden Force*, he used a fictional civil servant to satirise the fussy bureaucracy of the colonial period, while at the same time unconsciously highlighting the concepts of race that underpinned colonialism: 'The Secretary, Onno Eldersma, was a busy man. The daily mail brought an average of two hundred letters and documents to the residency office.' Eldersma 'worked morning, noon, and night. He allowed himself no siesta. He took a hurried lunch at four o'clock and then rested a little.' This fastidious obsessive could not delegate, since he felt that Europeans were better suited to this work than natives: 'he needed all his blood, all his muscles, all his nerves, for his work.' Whether it was