

LOOKING BACK

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Claire Holt had been a big presence in my life in Ithaca ever since I started studying Indonesian language and culture under her supervision at the end of the 1950s. But after my return from fieldwork in Java in the late summer of 1964, we became very close. Because she was physically frail, and busy writing her classic book *Art in Indonesia*, she stayed mostly at home, where I would visit her at least once a week. She would show me her slides, her pictures, her photo albums of the Dutch East Indies in the 1930s and the Republic of Indonesia in the 1950s. Quite often she would turn to copies she had of the journal *Djawa* published by the Java Instituut over the two decades of the interwar years. She wasn't at all a gossip, but I soon found out that she knew personally a very large number of the journal's contributors, some of them friends, some of them enemies. But what united them all, whether they were Dutch, Chinese, Eurasian, Javanese, Sundanese, or Balinese, whether they saw themselves as bureaucrats, archaeologists, musicologists, dilettantes, numismatologists, aristocrats, or historians, was that they were, in their own ways "liefhebbers," "lovers" (in the old sense of amateur) of a certain, very specific place, even if they called it by different names: Indië, Nederlandsch Indië, perhaps even Indonesia. This sense of connection, even if it sometimes had its bitchy side, made a strong impression on me, especially by comparison with the journals I flipped through in my hours as a young political scientist. What fun they must have had, even when they were quarrelling! How enjoyable to rub shoulders with lexicographers, *wayang* aficionados, theosophists, photographers, and policemen!

Here probably was one germ from which *Indonesia* originated—all the odder if one thinks of the contrast between the Orientalist, colonial ambience of *Djawa*, and the atmosphere of academic professionalism in American universities in the early 1960s. But there was a real connection, which was the impact that living in Indonesia made on the wave of graduate students, mainly from Cornell and Yale, who went there as the country's internal crisis deepened after 1957. George Kahin had been largely a lonely pioneer when he studied in Indonesia in 1948-1949; the "Harvard Group" of the early 1950s was very small, focussed its work in one locale, and perhaps had in Clifford Geertz too overpowering a single intelligence. But after 1958 Ruth McVey, Dan Lev, Mary Somers, and later Fred Bunnell, went to Jakarta to study national politics, John Smail and Bill Liddle left for Bandung and Pematang Siantar to study local history and politics, followed by Jim Siegel and Alfred and Judy Hudson doing anthropology in Aceh and Kalimantan. They knew each other in the field,

even if their fields were quite different, they visited each other, and helped each other out. Quite often they had Indonesian friends in common, among whom were often Indonesians they had known as fellow graduate students or as language teachers in the United States. A network was beginning to form which would grow ever wider as the years passed. And the basis for the network was certainly an emotional attachment to Indonesia and its peoples.

Big enough a network to form a cultural sphere in its own right (especially if one recalls the linkages already formed by older scholars like George Kahin, Harry Benda, John Echols, and Herbert Feith), it was quite insignificant in the vast universe of American universities across which graduate students were destined to be dispersed. And how to keep the existing intellectual and personal contacts alive with Indonesian, Australian, Dutch, English (and other) colleagues? Meantime, events were moving very rapidly in Indonesia itself, and it seemed important to find ways to keep the "network," such as it was, abreast of these events. Although the *China Quarterly* had shown how this could be done for *China-liefhebbers*, it was felt to be too exclusively focussed on current political and economic problems. But suppose one could mate the *China Quarterly* with *Djawa*?

Possibilities of this kind began to be discussed at the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project in mid-1965, initially between Ruth McVey (then a Visiting Fellow at the Project), Jim Siegel, beginning his teaching career in the Anthropology Department, Fred Bunnell, and myself (still trying to write up our theses). Quite soon, the circle of discussion widened to "comrades" at Yale and Berkeley, in Holland, Australia, and Indonesia. But nothing would have happened had not George Kahin, then Director of Cornell's Southeast Asia Program and of the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, offered his unstinting and enthusiastic support. It was the resources he made available that permitted the envisaged halfbreed journal to be born in April 1966, fifty issues ago. The timing of its appearance was not wholly accidental. The "coup" of October 1, 1965, the anti-Communist pogroms that followed between October 1965 and February 1966, the progressive removal of President Sukarno from effective power culminating in the silent coup of March 11, 1966, created an atmosphere of urgency. That urgency in turn reinforced our sense that the journal should not be just for fellow-scholars but should try to reach the widest possible public concerned with Indonesia.

That first issue of *Indonesia* looks very odd today, in its amateurishness, friendly eclecticism, and political concern. Jim Siegel, just back at Berkeley from his field work, was talked into writing about Prayer and Play in Aceh. Ernst Heins, successor to the great Dutch ethnomusicologist Jaap Kunst (who had been a pillar of *Djawa*) I had got to know while doing archival research in Holland; him we pressured into contributing a text on Javanese gamelan music. As was to be expected, Cornellians were heavily relied on: John Echols provided us with an ethnic bibliography on Aceh; Judy Hudson sent us some *Djawa*-style letters from the interior of Kalimantan; and Mrs. S.U. Nababan, then a graduate student in linguistics, translated for us a short story by Ayip Rosidi. Two of the editors shamelessly, without referees, inserted their own contributions—Ruth McVey a translation of a key text by the young Communist Semaun, myself a lightly documented essay on the languages of Indonesian politics. But the weight of the issue was clearly political. It included an absorbing article by Yale graduate student Lance Castles on an important Islamic school in Central Java during the claustrophobic atmosphere of late Guided Democracy; and 73 pages of translated documents relating to the mysteries of the October 1, 1965 "coup."

We thought of it as something experimental, probably with a short life. That it caught on, survived, now seems rather surprising. Doubtless two factors contributing to that survival were novelty and lack of competition. There simply was no journal like it. Another fac-

tor was sheer eclecticism: we could not be too choosy about contributors and contributions, and ruthlessly banged on the doors of friends and colleagues across the social sciences and humanities, and around the world. But the most important factor was *liefhebberij*, so that *Indonesia* owes its deepest thanks to Indonesia.

By the end of the 1960s the journal had visibly begun to change. Its original amateur editors had mostly gone on to jobs far from Ithaca. It was essential to find professional replacements, and we were very fortunate to find them in Elizabeth Graves, Linda Weinstein, Susan Hatch, and Judith Ecklund, even if each moved on to better things in due course. From early days we were extraordinarily lucky to obtain the typing and editorial services of Roberta Ludgate, who has now worked on 35 consecutive issues. Finally when Audrey Kahin became permanent professional editor, the journal came of age. In the meantime universities were turning out more and more well trained young graduates who had worked on Indonesia in different disciplines, creating a larger pool of potential contributors than before. The political atmosphere in Indonesia also became more settled with the entrenchment of Suharto's New Order, turning many people's interests away from politics.

Yet the halfbreed spirit of *Indonesia* has vigorously lived on. In the leisurely, *liefhebberij* way of *Djawa*, it has continued to publish articles much longer than those usually tolerated by disciplinary journals. The assumption continues to be that readers who know and love their Indonesia are not bored, or made restless, by Indonesian detail. In the political spirit of the *China Quarterly*, *Indonesia* has regularly featured controversial "theoretical" essays debating the nature of Indonesian society and history, as well as current politics and policies; and it has offered analyses of military and civilian leadership groups. It has also carried on the one thing that *Djawa* and the *China Quarterly* had in common—the translation of important vernacular texts—literary, historical, political—to help Indonesian voices speak in their own accents to the outside world.

