

“POPULAR ART” AND THE JAVANESE TRADITION

Clifford Geertz

There is a long tradition in the West of distinguishing between “high” and “low” art. All of us who have been formed in that tradition first absorb this grand dichotomy as an obvious bit of common sense, and then when we go off to study aesthetical matters in an Asian society, we take one or another version of it with us. Sometimes it appears as a contrast between “sophisticated” and “folk”; sometimes as one between “elite” and “popular”; sometimes as one between “court” and “country.” Sometimes it even takes on an air of scientific precision and objectivity: “Great vs. Little Tradition,” “Civilization vs. Culture,” “Art vs. Craft,” “Literature vs. Lore.”

But when we actually attempt to understand a particular sort of artistic expression in the societies to which we journey an odd thing happens. We discover both how inadequate and uncommonsensical the distinction is, and how inevitable and unsuppressible it is. The harder we struggle to replace the high art/low art contrast with something more appropriate to local realities, the more insistently the issues that, however clumsily, it brings into view demand to be confronted.

There is nothing scandalous in this. The history of anthropology has in large part consisted in taking concepts put together in the West (“religion,” “family,” “class,” “state”), trying to apply them in non-Western contexts, finding that they fit there rather badly at best, laboring to rework them so that they fit rather better, and then discovering in the end that, however reworked, many of the problems they pose—the nature of belief, the foundations of obligation, the inequality of life chances, the legitimacy of domination—remain clearly recognizable, quite alive. The puzzle, especially severe in connection with artistic expression, which would seem less bound to practical constraints and more wildly various even than belief, is why this should be so. Why, having banished ethnocentric formulations from our minds as heroically as we can, do we find ourselves confronting perplexities so dismayingly familiar?

The most common replies to this question are epistemological. Either they invoke intrinsic characteristics of art forms or of our responses to them, or they insist on the fact that we

simply can never wholly escape ethnocentric attitudes and can hope at best for a fusion of horizons in which our own horizon will never really disappear.

The first of these responses simply restates the question as though it were an answer. It is possible to regard plot, rhyme, texture, or tonal contrast as qualities inherent in aesthetic objects or in our capacities for perceptual understanding (though I doubt doing so will get you very far with developed forms fully entrenched in human lives). But to trace the high art/low art distinction to such matters seems quite implausible. *That* surely does not come with the anatomy of the senses or the architecture of the world.

The second response less restates the question than refuses to address it. We can, indeed, never wholly escape our cultural prejudices, and ought not to imagine that we can. But why these particular categories seem so hard even to discount, minimize, bracket, or evade, why even if not eradicable they are so much more resistant than others to being set aside, is hardly clarified by a general appeal to a universal ethnocentrism.

I want to take a different tack and to suggest, complete with examples and a case, that it is the differential involvement of art forms with social factors that takes us furthest toward comprehending just why it is that the contrast between fine arts and unfine is as tenacious as it is, why we keep running into it, maneuver though we may.

My case, is Java; my examples, a number of collective performances that I witnessed in Pare, a country town in the east-central part of the island, to which I returned in 1986, thirty-five years after I first worked there. Embedded in different social contexts, connected with different ideological positions, and running from the deeply traditional to the rather wildly post-modern, they define most of the range (though, of course, nowhere near most of the forms) of locally produced "aesthetic expression" as it now exists in rural Java. These performances—some religious, some secular; some traditional, some improvisational; some amateur, some at least semi-professional—form no sort of group, save in the eyes of the foreign beholder. But, by taking them together, I hope to show that it is sociological matters that account for the persistence of hierarchical distinctions among styles and genres and that give those distinctions their cultural appeal. The disjunctions of art and those of society are, here anyway, the same disjunctions. What is imaged on the stage is imagined in the streets.

2.

But first we must have some recent history. It is a history, convulsive and not entirely pretty, rather well known in its general outlines, but, understandably, not much thought of in terms of shifts in the forms of expressive discourse. In 1952-1954, when I was first in Pare, the multi-party system—Sukarnoists, Communists, two sorts of Islamicists—was in full swing, driven on by the extravagant symbology of radical nationalism, into which virtually everything public, art included, was somehow drawn. The increasing polarization this produced (by 1960 the town was two-thirds Communist, its surrounding villages two-thirds traditionalist Islam) as each ideological stream struggled for hegemony, culminated in the bloodletting of 1965, which was particularly severe in Pare. The role of the army may have been critical elsewhere, but in Pare the massacres were quite homemade, marked by a peculiarly ritualistic air of solemn cruelty that still disturbs just about everyone who was there and felt its depth.

Whatever the meaning of the 1965 massacre as an expressive event in itself (hardly the same for everyone in any case), it led on to a major change in the way in which the various

ideological currents of Pare present themselves in public life, and thus in the whole tone and logic of that life.

Competitive electoral politics was first muted, subsequently virtually eliminated, to the point where today it can scarcely be said to exist at all. Difference (religious, class, cultural, ethnic) remains, only somewhat altered and at least as sharp. But, driven, or frightened, away from partisan expression, it has entrenched itself in institutions (schools, churches, cults, welfare organizations, professional groups, cultural associations) that can be represented as non-political; moral, aesthetic, or recreational enterprises, merely functional and indifferent to power. The world has been turned less upside down than inside out.

The leading elements in this inside out world, where the contest of interests cannot be directly expressed and ideology must be made to look like art without art being made to look like ideology, are: (1) a state-orchestrated civil religion of vast proportions and uncertain content; (2) a neo-Javanism often mistakenly confused with it by outside observers; (3) an increasingly indigenized Islam dispersed into local expressions; (4) and what I can only weakly call—the thing defeats me—a quasi post-modernism of a quasi proto-middle class. What in the 1950s was a kind of rehearsal for civil war, is in the 1980s an exhibition of divergent thought lines, separated performances, and unjoined arguments. Parallel totalisms that battle without meeting.

The civil religion element, the so-called Pancasila, or "Five Points," creed to which everyone must give at least formal obeisance, and state employees must give a good deal more, is, being the official self-presentation of the country both to the world and to its inhabitants, the most familiar to outsiders. But like other such worked-up self-presentations (American constitutionalism, for example, or the high-tech traditionalism of Japan), it is not always very well understood by outsiders. In particular, its continuity with preceding approaches to the problem of bringing a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-island country into some sort of imaginative unity tends to be underestimated. The New Order/Old Order contrast, dissociating the present regime from its predecessor, and the even sharper Colonial/Independent one, dissociating the second half of the twentieth century from the first, tend to obscure, as they are intended to, the degree to which ideologists of public peace and civic cohesion come up with similar responses when faced with similar challenges.

The similar challenge is how to prevent regional, ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences from taking on political force. The similar response is to culturalize those differences as far as possible. A sharp distinction is made, propagated, and indeed enforced between the realm of "custom" (folklore, faith, costume, art), where variation is tolerated, even celebrated as a kind of spiritual richness, and that of the struggle for power, where any intrusion of such matters in any form at all is feared as a prelude to general upheaval. From the days of the Dutch depoliticization of Islam, through Sukarno's desperate attempt to whip up a nationalist storm that would sweep up contending world views into a single vision, to Suharto's determination to force anything even remotely communal, tribal, parochial, or sectarian out of the public arena, the aim has been to create a state "philosophy" soft enough to soothe "cultural" sentiments, and hard enough to contain them with the carefully fenced preserve of the officially unpolitical.

In present day Pare, the main institutional carriers of the Pancasila civil religion are the bureaucracy, the state political party Golkar, and various quasi-official professional associations—of teachers, of the police, of policemen's wives, and so on. All civil servants, dressed in special batik shirts, are obliged to spend the morning of the seventeenth of each month

(August 17, 1945 is Indonesia's independence day) receiving instruction in Pancasila doctrine and renewing their dedication to it. A significant part of the school curriculum at every level is given over to what are called "Pancasila studies." Friday sermons in the state mosque (called locally "the Golkar mosque") are dedicated to preaching the consonance of Pancasila ideals with those of Islam. The entrance to the town is now dominated by an enormous neo-realist Pancasila monument, presiding over a Pancasila heroes' cemetery. National holidays consist in mass celebrations of the creed. Television propagates it continuously. Placards and banners proclaim its slogans along the roads. Diffuse and inevitable, it forms a sort of ideological ground bass to which just about everything more specially phrased or locally voiced must somehow, in some register, relate.

Neo-Javanism (or as it is more and more referred to nowadays, "Javanologi") is such a special register, and one of increasing strength in central and to some extent eastern Java. Pancasila-ism has, of course, a Javanist cast, having been invented by a Javanese (Sukarno) and enforced by a government in which Javanese predominate. But its intent is in fact to muffle particularistic cultural expressions, to thin them out in favor of a generalized moralism of a developmentalist, pan-Indonesian sort. Its symbolism is Javanist, and so is its tone, but its ambition is to be all things to all groups: to reassure Sumatrans, Christians, Papuans, Jakartans, Hindus, and Chinese. Neo-Javanism is, on the contrary, an attempt to revitalize traditional Javanese beliefs and expressive forms, to return them to public favor by demonstrating their continued relevance to the contemporary world. It is, therefore, in a certain tension, quite muted and very obliquely expressed, with what it takes in the Pancasila view of things to be a lowest common denominator, spiritual anthology view of culture, as well as with modern materialism—sex, cinema, and rock-and-roll in general. Lodged in study clubs, mystical movements, and remodeled traditional observances, it is a limited, but for all that distinct and obstinate force in Pare life.

Islam is an even more distinct, much less limited, and far more obstinate cultural force; resistant both to Javanism, with which it has been intimately engaged for at least three centuries, and to the civil religion, with which its engagement is recent, wary, and ill-defined.

In the 1950s and 1960s, and even into the 1970s, the more strictly observant elements of Pare's population (perhaps a third of the total in the 1950s, perhaps more nearly half today) were sharply divided into reformers, anxious to confront the modern world head-on, and conservatives, seeking to resist its encroachments by throwing up a traditionalist wall against it. Indeed, the two groups seemed as often at each other's throats as they were at those of their cultural and religious adversaries. By the late 1980s, this antagonism, or at least any public expression of it, had nearly disappeared. The overall contrast between the two groups remains fixed and visible. But in line with the argument-without-debate, war-without-combat pattern now in force, each group presses its ideological course with but little thought to how the other is pressing its: the reformers (now less purist, thus less vehement) in their schools, clinics, prayer meetings, mosques, clubs, and confraternities; the conservatives (now less conventionalist, thus less defensive) in theirs.

The last major cultural force on the Pare scene, that which centers on the secondary and post-secondary school system, is at once the easiest to see and the hardest to grasp. This system has expanded enormously everywhere in Java, indeed almost everywhere in Indonesia. But in Pare, long a sort of schooling center for its region, it has quite literally exploded. Even in the 1950s, when there were but two public and three private junior high schools in the town and no senior high schools or universities at all, the local post-elementary school population was significant. Today, when there are forty-three junior and senior high schools, about three-quarters of them private, plus a couple of private "universities," the

student-teacher population in the town and the villages immediately around is overwhelming: as a guess about a third of the whole, now nearly sixty thousand. The presence of this "force" thus is clear.

Its content, however, and its place in the general pattern, are harder to convey. The other elements I've described play over it in complex ways. There are Muslim and Javanist schools, the Pancasila civil religion is by law taught in all schools, and the students have grown up and live within the context of one or another of these elements and will continue to do so. But, most important, there is connected to the "force" what can only be called, and the inhabitants of Pare in fact do call, a "youth culture," drawing on television, the cinema, magazines, popular music, and a vague yet powerful image of cultural modernity, as it supposedly exists in New York or Tokyo. Criticized by the neo-Javanists as vulgar and hedonistic, by the Muslims as immoral and materialistic, by the civil religionists as shallow and egoistic, it has, as one would expect, a certain vitality of its own, whatever it may lack in purity and definition. Less ground bass than improvisatory surface of Pare public life, it is by now an unsuppressible part of that life, another voice, loud and self-insistent, in the unjoined argument.

3.

In conveying what this clatter of cultural voices comes to in fact, one could begin just about anywhere in the catalog of mind-sets, so uncentered is the situation at the moment. But I shall start with an example from the school system sector, because unstandard, eclectic, and innocent of aesthetic self-consciousness, it will plunge us rather precipitously into the middle of things. Whatever else the graduation ceremony of Pare Junior High School, Number I, on May 1, 1986 was, it was certainly, by Javanese standards as by ours, "low art"—*populér*.

The ceremony, called, significantly as we shall see, *lepaskan*, "releasing," "setting free," or *perpisahan*, "divorce," "separation," took place in Pare's just completed Pancasila auditorium, a gigantic structure, at least for a town of this size, with a proscenium stage and space for more than 2,000 spectators. (The students are about fifteen years old at graduation, about thirteen at entry.) The stage was elaborately decorated with flowers, images of doves, rising from open hands, white against a blue sky background, and an enormous red banner with a Sanskritic phrase urging the students to go forth with "white blood"—that is, in nobility. There was a brand new, large, and quite complete, gamelan orchestra, the purchase of which had been paid for by local contributions and government subsidy in a matching grant pattern. (It had been constructed by traditional craftsmen in a nearby town for a price very near to cost.)

This orchestra was in the process of being rather uncertainly played as the audience filed in. The musicians were twenty or so students, dressed in the all-Indonesia junior high school uniform of white blouse and blue skirt or shorts, about half of them girls, half boys—in itself something of an innovation in a classical art form in which, save as singers, women do not normally participate. In front of the orchestra, kneeling and with Western-scored song books, was a choir of twenty or thirty girls. To one side of it there was a European podium with microphone, state seal, and national flag, to the other, a music synthesizer. The teachers, also in uniform, a military gray complete with rank insignia shoulder boards, occupied the first few rows of the auditorium. The parents and relatives, the women mostly in traditional dress, the men all in Western, were seated behind them. The students not directly involved in the proceedings were standing crowded, at the rear of the auditorium, spilling

noisily through the doors and windows onto the porch outside. So far, for an American, and despite the gamelan, the Sanskrit, and the shoulder boards, a scene not altogether unfamiliar.

It soon grew so. The proceedings began promptly with a young woman teacher reading the schedule of the affair, followed by a request for us to pray "according to our separate religions." The choir sang the school anthem, a Western-type hymn written by a retired teacher, accompanied by the teacher of what is called "modern" as opposed to "Javanese" music on the synthesizer, which turned out to emit a most extraordinary sound, rather like a low growl. The principal of the school followed with a review of the results of the state examinations, after which the performance proper, which lasted for three hours in the mid-morning heat, began.

It began with seven honor students being called up onto the stage. A boy and girl, dressed in traditional Javanese court dress, garlanded them with flowers. Another boy and girl, dressed in traditional Madurese dress (which, with hair shawl, black pajamas, etc., evoked the Islamist element in local culture as the courtly pair in headcloth and batik, evoked the Javanist), presented them with their citations. And a third couple, dressed in the Dutch-style Victorian dress of coat, tie, and long skirt, characteristic of the Christianized Minahassa of the northern Celebes, read out the citations.

This was followed by a group of seven female singers and four male guitarists. They presented a popular song, mimicked from television, which was extraordinarily emotional, in a lachrymose, agonizing style. The subject of the lyrics, which, assisted by their teacher, they themselves had written, was the pain of separation from the school, from their schoolmates, from their teachers, with the singers swaying gently and looking as though they were about to break at any moment into unrestrained sobbing. Toward the end of the song, several real doves were released by the singers, fluttering upward into the eaves, and the entire auditorium seemed sunk in a funereal mood.

This mood established, the head of the school and its senior woman teacher came onto the stage with the two top honor students, also one of each sex, and two selected parents. The two teachers, with the students between them, faced the parents standing opposite across the stage. Offstage, a voice intoned into a microphone, "Three years ago you [i.e., the parents] surrendered your children to us for safe-keeping and instruction. We now return them to you." The students moved from standing between the teachers to standing between the parents, and an extended, and again highly sentimental, dialogue between the two sets of adults, about separation, loss, inward desperations of the heart, the evanescence of feeling, and the emotional unity of souls, followed.

Next, the popular singers and guitar players reappeared with an even more emotional outpouring concerning separation and loss, though this time the subject was a broken teenage love affair, and was based on a currently popular song. This ended not with doves but with a poem recited, in a strangled voice, by another female student, also about parting, being let go, leaving the other classes behind, and comparing the whole experience to childhood separation from the mother's breast. This in turn was followed by short, but intense and high-flown speeches by representatives of the two other classes, lamenting, in an almost accusing manner, their being abandoned, left behind, neglected, forgotten by the departing graduates. The local head of the Ministry of Education, a political figure, himself not local, then mounted to the podium to deliver an official speech full of rhetoric about progress, patriotism, and Pancasila (which the students in the back jeered for its length, crying ironically "continue! continue!"). With another prayer, this one aggressively Islamic, by the

school religious teacher (all this took place in the depths of the fast month) and a final piece from the gamelan, perhaps to calm us all down, the ceremonies ended.

Any detailed analysis of the meaning of all this, and of its social implications, is impossible here. But the main points are simple enough.

First, assembled for the occasion by the teachers and students involved (there is no standard form, as yet, for this sort of thing), the performance nevertheless displays a clear dramatic form. It not only has something to say; it has found a way, collage-style, to say it. Second, the elements incorporated into that form range across the entire spectrum of locally available possibilities, from high Javanism through Islam and Pancasilaism to pop culture songs and film and television performance styles. Something for everyone in the symbolical mix. And third, the whole is animated by and contained within what is indeed the governing mood of the student-teacher "middle mass" of Pare: a sense of loss, drift, betrayal, and personal frustration.

The feelings projected here may be dramatized for effect. They certainly are stylized. But they are feelings that connect to those of a swollen, underpaid, and socially resentful teaching corps, and to an even more swollen, restless, and confused student class, trying to discover where it fits in a society which doesn't know quite what to do with it. The graduation may have been non-partisan. It certainly was not non-political.

4.

Turning now to the more explicitly Islamic expressions on the Pare scene, to "Muslim performances," and to the more self-consciously religious way of being-in-the-world in which they are rooted, there were, as I mentioned, essentially two camps in the emphatically Muslim sector of the population in the 1950s. (The small, but important Christian minority aside, virtually everyone—before their demise, even the Communists—was, and is at least formally Muslim.) One of these camps called itself "modern" and was determined to confront the contemporary world more or less on the terms set by that world. The other, which called itself "traditional," or even, and proudly, "old fashioned," was no less determined to keep that world at arm's length. In the 1980s the two camps still exist, in the sense that hamlets, neighborhoods, families, economic strata, institutions, and so on that fell on one side of the divide or on the other in the 1950s remain precisely where they were, virtually without exception in a continuity that is almost eerie. But the ideological basis of the distinction between them, and the nature of their relations to one another, have radically altered.

The relations have simply attenuated. What was once a bitter internecine conflict, a competition for the Islamic soul, is now a they-are-they and we-are-we insularity. The two camps don't have a great deal to do with one another any more and each is largely unaware of what the other is up to. Insofar as they do meet, which is seldom, they do so in a spirit, if not exactly of cordiality, for they remain very dubious of one another, at least of "let us not get into difficult matters."

On the doctrinal side, the alterations have been no less consequential. The "conservative" tendency has turned away from reflexive suspicion of everything that has happened in the world since Al-Ghazzali toward an intensely experiential, essentially mystical, conception of religiosity, and to an attempt to connect such a religiosity to long-standing intellectual traditions in Javanese Islam, a process sometimes referred to as "indigenization." For its part, the "modernist" tendency has turned away from apologetic attempts to show that atomic physics is implicitly in the Quran, or that the avoidance of

pork has a medical rationale, toward a hyper-universalistic conception of Islam as an essentially placeless, trans-cultural, and more than a little besieged world religion, in dialogue and in competition with other, equally placeless, equally trans-cultural, and equally besieged world religions—part of a global crisis of faith. What was once a difference over how to live in a secular world is now one over how to desecularize it.

This difference leads, in the present culture-not-politics environment that Pancasilaism defines and its agents enforce, to the two camps being faced with different problems as they position themselves within that environment. The indigenists find themselves involved in a Church-State problem of precisely the sort, render unto Caesar, that is not supposed to exist in Islam, and with respect to which they feel extremely uneasy. The universalists find themselves involved in a Church-World problem, connecting Quran and Hadith moralism to the way Muslims live now, with respect to which they feel themselves at more than a bit of a loss. Brief descriptions of, first, an enormous prayer meeting at a large mosque boarding school in a village near Pare, and, second, of another graduation, this time at a private enterprise, part-time Muslim school, also in a village, for the teaching of English, should make all this more vivid.

The mosque-school prayer meeting, which is not quite the right term (the Indonesian is *pengajian*, which literally means “Quran recital,” which is not quite right either), was held at a huge mosque cum religious boarding school cum Naqshabandiyyah mystical fraternity, affiliated, as are the overwhelming majority of such schools, with the Muslim social organization, and until recently political party, Nahdatul Ulama, mainstay since the 1920s of conservative Islam. Such prayer meetings, small, local affairs, combining a sermon, collective praying, Quran chanting, and ritualized contributions are held, literally in the thousands, at least once a week all over Java. In east and central Java large regional meetings are held once a month in which local congregations, or at least their leading figures, gather together at one of the larger schools, the particular location rotating among sub-regions. Once every four months a huge, summit prayer meeting is held, which rotates among the regions, to which as many as five or six thousand people, women as well as men, come, including just about anybody who is anybody in Nahdatul Ulama Islam anywhere in Java, to feast, pray, socialize, and to listen to sermons by national religious leaders. This was one of the latter.

The speakers, who addressed the huge crowd, pressed together in and around the mosque, from about ten in the morning until about one in the afternoon, were two: the regional head of Nahdatul Ulama, recently resigned from the national parliament, a relatively secular figure insofar as one can talk of such in this context, and the head of a large mystical order in north central Java, famous across the island for the vehemence and colloquial splendor of his sermons. Their talks, at once improvisational and very intricately organized, performative artworks abounding in images, quotations, allusions, similes, puns, apostrophes, jokes, and calling for a continuous drumbeat of response—amens, echoes, completion of unfinished sentences, replies to rhetorical questions—from the audience, were, in stylistic terms, in almost dialectical opposition. The ex-MP spoke in middle Javanese peppered with school Indonesian in a charged but extremely consecutive, simple, and explicit manner, everything spelled out as for a child, with an occasional high Javanese sentence or two thrown in for politeness’s sake. The mosque preacher spoke in low Javanese in a darting, fragmentary, highly digressive manner, full of asides, parentheses, irrelevancies, and jet-propelled metaphorical flights, everything diffused and elaborated as for a religious adept, with an occasional Indonesian sentence thrown in for modernity’s sake. But their

subject was identical: the relation of Islam as a "Religion" to Pancasila as a "Philosophy." So was what they said about it.

This issue, which had been brewing since the advent of the Suharto regime with its increasing insistence on the Pancasila as the sole ideological foundation of the State, was precipitated about a year before this gathering by the Government's proclamation that all political parties would henceforth have to campaign under an explicit and exclusive commitment to the Pancasila. For Muslim parties, and especially for the Nahdatul Ulama, this raised a threat of idolatry, for it appeared to elevate the tenets of a secular creed over those of Islam. After much debate, the party resolved the problem, for itself anyway, by deciding officially no longer to be a party at all (hence the MP's resignation) and to revert to what it had been in the colonial 1920s and 1930s, a non-political "cultural organization."

It was this decision, and the separationist doctrine implicit in it, that, after more than four decades of telling its rank and file that Islam was a comprehensive ideology, political as well as religious, freed by Independence to assert its full self, now had to be explained and justified to that rank and file, a task not made any easier by the fact that those who were doing the explaining and justifying were hardly more comfortable with the revised view of things than were those to whom they were explaining and justifying it. The one thing harder than making a strained argument is making a strained argument you can't quite bring yourself to believe. (The argument within the organization is, in fact, very far from over even now.)

Despite all this, and whatever their differences in oratorical style, the two speakers performed this task with elan, eloquence, and what seemed to me great persuasiveness. The ex-MP traced in words of one syllable the twists and turns of Nahdatul Ulama history to show that the new apolitical policy was really not a surrender to power but a return to the organization's original ideals. The religious teacher filled his speech with references to the Quran and Hadith to show that the new policy was not in conflict with Islamic orthodoxy, but a natural extension of it. Islam is a religion that comes from God, they both said, Pancasila is a philosophy that comes from man. Different sorts of thing, they can't possibly be in conflict. The Prophet is the head of the Muslim community, the President is the head of the national community. Differently led toward different ends, the two communities are not opposed. The intricacies of this, which were subtle to a degree, aside, the performance as a whole, deeply Javanese in everything from dress, architecture, setting, and communal feasting to language, mood, memory, and etiquette, was a powerful expression of the present "indigenist" turn in "conservative" Islam—an ultra-traditional art form animated with ultra-contemporary content.

On the other side of the line, in what used to be called "modernist" and might now be better termed (though no one in Pare actually does) "universalist" circles, the relations between forms of expression and the outlook that animates them tend to be rather different. The forms are much more contemporary, up-to-date; the outlook much more earnest, pragmatic, and culturally uncomfortable. Easy neither with spiritual eclecticism of the high school sort nor with a Javanized Islam of the prayer-meeting sort, the universalist-minded find themselves a bit at sea, unsure how to present themselves on the local scene. As avatars of progress, intent on opening Islam to worldly energies? As pillars of rectitude, intent on sustaining its moral intensity in the face of worldly distractions?

My case here is again a school "graduation," though this time from a rural Muslim institution for the teaching of English, and referred to not as a *perpisahan*, "separation," but a

halal bihalal, an Arabic phrase meaning, roughly, mutual forgiveness of sins, but in Indonesian or Javanese having more the sense of a reciprocal expression of faithfulness and solidarity between self-conscious Muslims.

The founder of this school was, in fact, not Javanese at all. He was a native of Kalimantan, who, having saved some money as a roustabout in the timber fields, had come to Java to study at Gontor, near Madiun, perhaps the most famous innovative mosque-school in Indonesia, often taken as the very image of Islamic modernity. His resources exhausted after a while, and attracted by the reputation of a famous local modernist scholar (a man who had traveled in India, the Middle East, and the United States), he moved to the Pare area, studied Arabic, English, and comparative religion with the scholar for a couple years, married the daughter of a local hamlet chief, related, as virtually everyone in this hamlet is, to the scholar, and founded the school—"The Basic English Course"—in 1983. Based on a course program prefabricated in the United States, the school had about eighty paying students (five dollars American a month, a serious sum), about half of them men and half women, from all over the general region and a few from far outside it. Most of them were also students or teachers in regular schools, religious and secular, of one sort or another, or had commercial jobs, and studied English for two or three hours a day as an add-on, an exhausting business.

The ceremony, held on the evening of Idul Fitri, the great holiday that ends the Fast month, took place on the school grounds, a cluster of simple bamboo classroom buildings set round the courtyard of the home of the director's father-in-law, the now-retired hamlet chief, with perhaps 300 people in attendance, virtually of all of them, from their dress—the women heavily shawled, the men in black jacket and black overseas cap—what I have called "emphatic," "strict," "observant," or "self-conscious" Muslims. The audience sat in folding chairs facing a small, improvised stage decorated with coconut fronds, with a podium and microphone to one side of it (from which two girls, called "the Protocol," regulated the evening's agenda, one speaking English, the other repeating in Indonesian), a banner across it announcing in English that this was "The Third Reunion of Ex-students of the Basic English Course of Singgahan, Pelem," and a cassette system to the other side of it from which modern music blasted at ear-splitting levels whenever the proceedings showed signs of lagging.

The opening phase of the ceremonies (which, in all, lasted from eight in the evening to about one in the morning) was purely religious, though in the universalist, not the indigenist manner. There was a prayer in Arabic, led by the head of the civil service in the Pare district office, the highest ranking individual, and indeed the only public official beyond those of the hamlet and some neighboring hamlets, in attendance. This was followed by a collective recitation of the Fatiha, the preamble to the Quran, which functions in Islam a bit like the Lord's Prayer does in Christianity—the one liturgism everyone knows. Next came three chantings of a very long Quranic passage, first in Arabic, by a heavily shawled girl, then in Indonesian, by a boy in the standard black overseas cap, white shirt, and black trousers, and then in English, by yet another boy similarly dressed, but with white tennis shoes and a garish tie. Three welcoming addresses, also religious in content, by a representative of the graduating class and of each of the classes already graduated, again one in Arabic, one in Indonesian, and one in English, with the appropriate dress and speech styles, concluded this phase of things. Then the student performances began, and once more the familiarity of established practice, already a bit bent, suddenly, thoroughly, and spectacularly crumbled.

Three quite small boys, perhaps seven or eight years old, initiated the festivities. Made up in white face, they were mimes, and quite good ones. They conducted, in excruciating slow motion, an extended and complicated sham street fight, at the conclusion of which they all collapsed like rag dolls in a heap. Or perhaps like exhausted balloons, for another boy then came on and gradually, body section by body section, mime-pumped them back up again. The point of all this was obscure (and not just to me but to the audience in general, whose members kept whispering, as they did throughout the evening, hypotheses to one another about what was going on). But it seemed to be some sort of mute salute to the speaking, or near-speaking, of English, a supposition confirmed when the next act came on: a half dozen older boys, of perhaps nineteen or twenty, also mimes, and of extraordinary skill.

The performance of this group, who called themselves (in English) "The Street Boys," went on for nearly an hour and is far too complicated to describe in any detail here. The lead figure was a man in white-face, Western hat, and dark glasses, dressed in hyper-urban, Jakarta-hustler style. He entered, pulling on an imaginary rope, dragging the others of the troupe out one by one, each of them moving in a different manner: flapping like a rag doll, jerking like a mechanical man, strutting like a pimp, prancing like a mad man. The lead figure opened their mouths automatically with a startle-clap, put cigarettes in their mouths, lit the cigarettes, caused them with another startle-clap to hold the cigarettes at arm's length, and then turned his back on them, leaving them frozen in their various eccentric poses. Various other mimings followed. The lead tied the others up with a cord and then pushed them over like a bale, he picked them up by the crotch, he goosed them, and so on. Then, suddenly, the whole group found its voice and burst into a parody song in English ("I went to the theatre/ It was very interesting/ But I didn't enjoy it/ People were in front of me/ People were in back of me/ I got very angry"), which they sang over and over again in a hilarious series of mockeries of popular song styles—the Indonesian ones called *dangdut* and *kroncong*; Bob Dylan, Hard Rock, Country; a number of others I didn't recognize for certain. They closed with a very funny mime of a student trying to study English from a book, and exited leaving an audience applauding rather more in bewilderment than anything else.

Next, considering the context, the most extraordinary happening of the evening took place. Three young women in extremely garish, wildly clashing, mod-singer dress, with very short skirts and very stuffed brassieres, heavy make-up, flamboyant costume jewelry, and again dark glasses (they were so outlandish, I thought at first that they were cross-dressed men) came on and performed a rock-singing parody, complete with exaggerated bump-and-grind movements and wild yeh-yeh cries.

And if the audience, by now grown extremely uneasy indeed, was not put off enough by this, the girls were followed on to the stage by a boy of about twenty, dressed as a student, carrying a yellow folder, racing erratically about as maniacs do, and rambling inconsequently on in gibberish English. After ten minutes or so of this—tearing paper, studying the folder, grimacing wildly, jabbering continually—a younger boy came on to talk him, in Indonesian, into leaving the stage, which after another ten minutes or so and to the palpable relief of the audience, he reluctantly did, still declaiming in parodic English.

The final phase (it was now about midnight) both put things back on track and reintroduced something recognizably Islamic into the proceedings. The religious scholar, the Director's patron, gave a brief sermon in excellent English. Starting off from the Quranic sura, "All men know We have created you from a male and a female and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another" and the Hadith about seeking knowledge even unto China, he urged tolerance between religion and religion, nation and

nation, color and color, language and language. And, after I gave a brief address, first in English, then in Indonesian, expressing my gratitude for being there, the Director closed with a long, fiery sermon in Indonesian, ambiguously referent to the significance of what we had just seen:

You should not think that if you know English you will become modern and forget the norms and ideals of Islam and can transcend established religion. The purpose of studying English is to serve Allah, not to advance one's personal fortunes. English is a 'seed' for Islam and it is not to be used to undermine Islam. I am not afraid of the West. I welcome it. But I am afraid of losing true religious feeling.

After this, and a final prayer in Arabic, "The Protocol"—"Good Night"/"Selamat Malam"—closed the proceedings.

Once again, one could go on at length about what all this "means," about just what was being said and unsaid in this curious progression, bracketed with ritualisms, from Marceau's *Bip*, through Ionesco's "Language Lesson," to Lucky's speech in *Godot*. (It is very doubtful, incidentally, that any of the participants had ever heard of, much less witnessed, any of these, with the possible exception of Marceau, or Marceau imitators—that rope is too reminiscent—on television. The construction and transmission of such "popular culture" forms as these, the models on which they are based, and the channels by which they are diffused, in today's rural Java awaits its student.)

But it seems clear that a tension between a desire to make connection with contemporary life at its most contemporary, and to maintain the essential impulses of a severe, even puritanical Islam, animated the whole occasion, both in terms of the performance itself and the relation of the audience to it. The evening was a stream of moralities, mockeries, ambivalences, ironies, outrages, and contradictions, almost all of them centering in one way or another around language and the speaking of language, that very nearly cancelled one another out. Uncrossable lines were crossed in play, irrationalities displayed in quotation marks, codes mixed and rhetorics apposed, and the whole project to which the school is dedicated, extending the impact of Islam (perhaps the most linguistically self-conscious of the great religions) on the world through the learning of a world language was put into question. (This was the only performance in Pare I have ever seen where Javanese played absolutely no role at all, save, of course, among the whispering auditors trying to organize their confusions, hardly any of whom, as a final irony, knew any English.) If the bewilderments of secular adolescence were articulated at the high school, the equivocalities of political Islam at the prayer meeting, the stammerings of religious progressivism were, and not less eloquently, articulated here.

5.

The expressions associated with the final two culture-currents I want to discuss here, neo-Javanist neo-traditionalism, "Javanologi," and the state-sponsored civil religion, "Pancasila," are less easily isolable in representative performances, compact displays that bring everything together, as well as less easy to distinguish from one another.

In part, this is because both currents are, relatively speaking, more "writerly" in nature than they are "dramatistic," the first in a philosophical vein (what is the meaning of Everything?), the second, in an ideological one (what must Everyone affirm?). In part, it is because, insofar as they do connect with public performances, the forms for which they have an affinity, classical arts and traditional rituals on the one hand, national holidays and polit-

ical ceremonials on the other, are well-established institutions which have roots and resonances quite independent of the particular concerns of either current: sustaining high culture in the face of modernization; maintaining social calm in the face of group tension. And in part, it is because they appeal, in their blurry generality, to the same sort of people, the schooled and literate professional class of Pare (doctors, teachers, administrators, managers, technicians, artists, policemen) instinctively reluctant to being seen as clearly committed to anything definite in the way of belief. At this end of the spectrum, difference of outlook is rather more atmospheric than visible, smudged than sharpened. But, to those not unused to hearing hard arguments uttered in soft voices, it is no less real.

The determined attempt to draw the political sting of religion, language, art, and custom that has set in since Suharto's advent (though it has, as I suggested earlier, a much longer history) leads, especially in Java, certainly in Pare, to a delicate sort of interaction between those whose concerns are moral, aesthetic, and metaphysical and who wish to strengthen the bonds of spiritual like-mindedness, and those whose concerns are oral, exhortatory, and practical and who fear the disruptive power of such bonds when openly displayed and publicly paraded. The first risk accusations of cultural chauvinism, the second of cultural shallowness. But the outcome is less a contrast between Javanizers and non-Javanizers, than, and that muted, allusive, and indirect, between two kinds of Javanizers: in the idiom, "black plate" and "red plate."

The terms derive from the differently colored automobile license plates, black for privately owned cars, red for government-owned ones, now prescriptive in Indonesia, and grow in this signification out of the recent history of the Javanologi movement—if a diffuse, divided, and scattered network of study clubs, seminars, art institutes, dance academies, devotional groups, scholarly associations, pilgrimage cults, and publishing enterprises can be called a movement. This history, which extends from the ministerial, and even the Presidential, level to the regional and the local, is too complex and too difficult at this point to fix empirically to be recounted here. But it involves the recrudescence in the late 1970s and early 1980s, of a *Kulturkampf* sort of debate that first arose in nationalist circles in the 1930s (it was called the Borobodur Polemic, after the great Buddhist monument in Central Java), between those arguing for the revivification of precolonial indigenous civilization, which for the most part meant Javanese (or Javo-Balinese), as the basis for Indonesian nationalism, and those arguing for the necessity to create a new "national culture," plural, eclectic, impartial, and cosmopolitan, to provide such a basis.

When the Ministry of Culture and Education began to set up a series of regional culture-promoting efforts for the various parts of the country, under the "spiritual resources" policy of the Pancasila approach to religion, art, folklore, craft, and the like, this debate, which, though it had never completely disappeared, had been at least dormant since the emblematic outrages of 1965, was inadvertently reintroduced into public consciousness.

In Java (the only region, apparently, where it took much hold, though it seems to have had some impact in Bali as well) it led, first, to the beginning of "Javanologi" as an institutionalized entity, however invertebrate, and then to something of a reaction, if not against it as such, against the neo-parochialism it supposedly represented. The "national culture" attacks revived. Accusations of Javanese domination within the Suharto government, always current in intellectual circles, heated up. The suspicion that various central Javanese political personalities were involved behind the scenes appeared and spread. (Even the Borobodur Polemic was formally re-enacted in the national arts center in Jakarta, though all save one of the original participants—as it happens the most zealous of the cosmopolitans—were dead.) After the death of the minister concerned, the head of the program was replaced

by someone hardly less Javanist, merely less strenuous, as the Javanese would say, more polished, about it all. But the original enterprise continued as a private initiative alongside, and in at least oblique rivalry with, the ministry-sponsored one. Hence the red plate, black plate distinction.

Again, I should not want to suggest that the details of this rather elitist cultural politics have filtered down to Pare, and certainly not that there are, in that calmed-down place, two well-defined culture-factions openly contending with one another. What there is is a general and diffuse contrast between those whose concern with Javanese tradition is deep and intense and who are at least dubious about the watery expressions of the civil religion, and those for whom Javanism, suitably moderated, is fine in its place but must be contained within, and turned to the support of official ideals. And, as with the other tendencies I have described, they are less in confrontation with one another (no one prudent is in confrontation with Pancasilaism) than pursuing separately their separate courses.

For the neo-traditionalists, the main avenues of public expression are the revived scholarly enterprise of applying "scientific" methods of analysis to "indigenous" cultural phenomena, "Javanologi" proper, and an also revived and mightily expanded pilgrimage pattern.

The scholarly studies consist mainly of efforts to demonstrate the compatibility of the conceptions incarnate in classical art forms (dance, drama, music, textiles, and most especially the shadow-play) with those of modern physics, genetics, psychology, or medicine; attempts to develop "Javanese economics," "Javanese jurisprudence," "Javanese pedagogy," "Javanese linguistics," or "Javanese psychoanalysis," out of the same materials; evaluations of Javanese folk therapies, excavations of pre-Islamic Javanese archaeological sites, interpretations of Javanese history, Javanese statecraft, Javanese ethics, Javanese poetics, Javanese philosophy, even Javanese technology and Javanese time-keeping. Most of these studies are, of course, not original to Pare, but are presented at study clubs and university seminars in the larger central Javanese cities and then published in popular form. But their local effect is nonetheless palpable. Especially among the professionals of the town (which in addition to the enormous teaching corps already mentioned, houses two major hospitals, seven churches—a number of them intensely Javanist—and a half-dozen technical bureaus staffed by engineers, agronomists, veterinarians, pharmacists, and accountants), such writings, and the views they reflect, are quite influential. (Pare, which once had one bookstore, now has more than a half-dozen, a number of them specializing in Javanist writings.) Though no match for the glitter of the youth culture or the grip of Islam, and constrained by official wariness as to its deeper agenda, "Javanologi" is a thought-form of some force on the Pare scene.

It is, however, in the very rapidly expanding pilgrimage pattern (exploding is perhaps not too strong a term) that this thought-form makes its main popular appeal. The pattern itself is, of course, an old, not to say ancient, one in Java, involving journeys to Hindu ruins, caves, volcanoes, waterfalls, and other sacred sites. In Pare of the 1950s, the main such site was at the town center, an unimpressive collection of small Indic statues, representing Ganesa, Siva, and the like, huddled at the foot of a gigantic banyan tree, at which each Thursday evening a small band of people made a few furtive offerings. In the 1965 upheavals the statues were shattered and the site despoiled by Muslim militants who saw in it an expression of "Communist atheism." The statues were later reassembled and the site restored, but pilgrimage to it, though it shows some signs of reviving, is now rare.

Instead, there has developed, in a village about five miles from town, an enormous pilgrimage site—perhaps a dozen hectares—commemorating the famous prophesier-king of medieval Java, Jayabaya, to which once every thirty-five days in the Javanese calendar literally thousands of people from all over the eastern and central parts of the island come to bathe, pray in the Hindu style, make flower and incense offerings, and, not the least sacred of the acts, pass the night in meditation. Located at the village edge amid rice fields, the site was built—or, anyway, built up—in the late 1970s by a private foundation under the direction of the Sultan of Yogyakarta, the late Hamengku Buwono IX, ("Sukarno didn't dare [i.e. spiritually dare, being a commoner] to build it," one worshiper told me. "Suharto didn't dare to build it. The Sultan had a vision while meditating in his palace and he, having the 'power,' [*sakti*] built it.") There are a number of large structures, most in an ornate Javo-Balinese style, constructed around a few unimpressive Indic ruins, rather like those in Pare, with a modern bathing place, broad covered spaces to spread mats for worship, and the like.

Despite its rather desultory air and lack of firm dramatic form (men and women coming and going, wandering about here, praying there, meditating alone, sitting about in small groups quietly conversing, sleeping, bathing, eating snacks bought from one or another of the temporary food stands about, straggling up toward the ruins to make a *sembah* and leave an offering—a pattern without climax, certainly without collective climax, or even clear direction) this sort of performance has a power of its own, if only because of the demographic scale of it: the Javanese crowd at worship. There is something impressive about a great lot of people doing the same sort of thing, even, or perhaps in this sort of setting, because, they are doing it in an offhand, excursionary way, unpressing, uncoordinate, and uncolliding.

Nor is this an unusual phenomenon. Several such sites, most of them new (or revived), some of them nearly as large, have appeared over the past few years at various points in the general region in which Pare is found and to which local people journey with some frequency, now that jitney travel is so much easier. Not the least important of these (though not the most, for its political overtones give some people pause) is President Sukarno's grave at Blitar, about a day's drive away, to which pilgrimages are made on appropriate days. In 1986, June 21st was the sixteenth anniversary of his death (that is, two eight-year periods, a significant Javanese calendrical unit, rather like our decade). After a ritual feast held in Pare the night before, about fifty people—some of them old Sukarnoist stalwarts, some of them younger admirers of his reputation, others just along for the pilgrimage—went off in hired cars to worship at his grave and, a few miles further on, look at the sea.

The attitude of local officialdom, and especially the agents of order, the police and the army, toward all this is, as I have intimated, a bit wary, especially as it is enveloped by various sorts of mystical organizations, some formal, some inchoate, that could conceivably spill over into the kind of subversive revivalist activity, nativist cults with a political edge, that have occasionally proved troublesome in this part of Java. But, so far, nothing more than wariness is involved, for little of such a political edge is in fact present, and the institutions of the civil religion are considered increasingly adequate to blunt what is.

Those institutions are, as I have said, mainly national holidays, of which, given the number of events available to celebrate in nationalist history, there are a great many, and political occasions, which, given the absence of much in the way of party political competition any more, come to about the same thing: the celebration of the state, its history, its ideals, and most especially its present government.

Of the holidays, the most important is August 17th, Independence Day, which is crowded with Pancasila-type speeches by virtually every government official in any government office of any importance, various commemorative ceremonies, and a great number of "cultural" entertainments. (In Pare, the dress-representation of sub-cultures we saw in the graduation ceremony is extended to include all twenty-seven provinces of the country.) The most important of the political occasions is doubtless the national election, which in Indonesia has become a year or more long process, with each stage from the registration of the voters, through the organization of the government party's "campaign," to the actual voting being marked with the symbology of what has come to be known, mostly without irony, as "The Festival of Democracy."

I will, however, use as my example of Pancasilaism in performance a lesser, but more compact, event, the fortieth anniversary celebration of the founding of the State Police. This shows something at least of the general pattern; though I might quite as well have chosen the end-of-Fast mass prayer at the state mosque or the annual celebration of the founder of one of Pare's constituent villages, both rather revised from the traditionalized rituals they were when I first witnessed them. The iconography of the civil religion invades virtually everything public in Pare these days. Nothing of weight is left untouched.

Anniversaries of institutions, public and private alike, are very common occurrences in today's Pare. Hardly a week goes by in which one does not see some huge banner strung across the high road announcing one or another such. So far as the State Police are concerned, Pare, which is the headquarters not just for itself and its immediate region but for the whole regency (Kediri), has a very large complement of them, most living in an extensive barracks area in the center of town next to the bazaar. So far as the central power is represented locally *as* power, it is the police who represent it, not the army, which (though presumably of consequence behind the scenes) is nearly invisible in Pare, where it has but a skeleton installation.

The police celebrated their anniversary by staging, in the forecourt of their headquarters near the town center, a traditional shadow play, a *wayang*, conducted by a famous puppeteer hired from the central Javanese court area. In the 1950s, shadow plays were mostly sponsored in Pare by private persons in celebration of familial occasions—a wedding, a circumcision, a new house. Today, few private people have the resources to sponsor them, for, locally at least, the *wayang* has changed from a popular art to a carriage-trade item. The government thus tends to become its residual patron. Most performances are connected with some civic occasion or other (something that is true as well of classical dance and classical drama) and the performers, both musicians and puppeteers, are imported professionals. The local semi-professionals, so common in the 1950s, have virtually ceased to exist.

In any case, so far as the police self-celebration is concerned, the *wayang* performance itself, though it ran for the usual early evening to early morning period and was unusually well done, was quite peripheral; a cultural gesture, laid on for the form of it. The heart of things was an elaborate two-hour social ritual that preceded, and so far as the celebrators were concerned, quite eclipsed it.

The entire higher civil service corps of Pare, together with spouses, the Regent, his wife, and his entourage, the heads of all the districts in the regency and their wives, and virtually every individual (or anyway every Javanese individual) of standing in Pare, again with spouses—in short, the bulk of the local elite—were first feasted in traditional communal meal style, and then pressed into service as audience for the ritual. After speeches of extreme formality even for Javanese public occasions, some in high Javanese, some in a mix-

ture of literary Indonesian and high Javanese, from the most prominent of the guests—the Regent (a military officer), the Chief of Police, various bureau heads—a series of prizes were awarded for public service to prominent individuals and to various boy scout troops from around the regency.

That in itself is perhaps unremarkable. What was remarkable was the haze of court-Javanese symbology in which all this was enfolded. Each prize awarding (there must have been fifteen or twenty in all) was accompanied by the bringing out of an enormous rice mountain, set on a large tray with various sorts of decorative foods surrounding it, from the rear of the courtyard. These were carried by small girls dressed as traditional court dancers, who, accompanied by gamelan music, moved with stately, decelerated court-dance steps to the presentation area, where they were met and flanked by an older boy and girl dressed as figures in the classical dance-drama, *wayang wong*. The prize awarding, and the passage to the awardees of the rice mountain, was then accomplished in the deeply deferential style of a court servant making obeisance to a king.

All this took place under the general direction of a very clever master of ceremonies, who seems to have designed it all, and who, after introducing the leading guests in suitably flamboyant form, produced a stream of jokes, puns, exegetic etymologies of key words, place names, and official abbreviations (he did ten extraordinary minutes, baroque and uninhibited, on the Pancasila alone) of the sort of which the Javanese are so fond, and of course paeans to the Police, the Nation, the Regime, and the President. Searching for an analogy, which is perhaps a mistake, I can only think of a Hollywood costume musical of the 1940s, though contemporary Indian movie-operettas, popular in Indonesia, are perhaps the more relevant model. In any case, very much something of a production.

The shadow play, as I say, followed. But the moment it began all the distinguished guests, to the last man and woman, departed immediately for home. Even the police, save for those on duty, all left. The courtyard now painfully empty, the members of the general public—young villagers and street-boys for the most part, together with a sprinkling of market women and elderly gentlemen—who had been watching the proceedings silently, and so far as I could see, indifferently, from the high road outside the compound, began tentatively to move forward, if not fully into the courtyard, where the chairs for the guests had been set up, at least to the edges of it, until very shortly they comprised the entire audience for the shadow play, which, standing crowded together, they watched with great intensity, most of them for the rest of the night. The shadow play here thus more underlined the difference between Javanese traditionalism and Javanese neo-traditionalism than it did their connection. Doubtless in other regions of the country the decor on such occasions is adjusted to local modes of style and expression. But the gap between the sensibilities associated with the civil religion and the cultural currents it seeks to embrace, remains, I am quite sure, as abrupt, as wide, and as unintentionally ironic.

6.

The interplay of expressive forms from the mass media, folk arts, rituals, court traditions, public ideologies—some quite new, some very old; some direct and improvisatory, crude even, some allusive and highly worked, effete even; some technically undemanding (a guitar strumming, a song parody), some technically extraordinarily demanding (a *wayang*, a Quranic chant); some with hardly any pretensions beyond emotional appeal and personal sincerity, some suffused with the aura of ancient myths and great revelations: this is what comprises the "art world" in contemporary Pare and, I daresay, if the matter were looked

into, a goodly part of contemporary Asia away from the officialized culture of capital cities, the academicized culture of the universities, and the commercialized culture of tourist spots. The mixture of "low" arts and "high" ("low" and "high" in the eyes of the practitioners, though the local terms naturally vary), partly in contention, partly in mere conjunction is thus, as is the distinction itself, a product less of intrinsic differences, formal or contentual, than of the hectic flow of social discourse. It is common life, diverse and irregular, that divides, sorts, ranks, and arranges.

So far as Pare is concerned, though here, too, I think the matter very general, the dividing, sorting, ranking, and arranging is not only very much unsettled, a clatter of claims, diverse and unjoined, it is in itself a social force, part of the struggle for power, status, wealth, and recognition—not some mere "reflection" of it. When, as they certainly will, the processes of social and economic change bring the town's (and Indonesia's) youth, school teachers, religious figures, culture conservers, bureaucrats, and security forces once more into direct and immediate debate, into political struggle explicitly voiced, it is in terms of such symbologies as I have described (and others that I have not) that it will take place. The vocabularies are there, however ill-ordered. They await only more confrontational use. Like "high" status and "low," "high" art and "low," are, in "The Orient" as in "The Occident," combatative terms.