

Danilyn Rutherford. *Raiding the Land of the Foreigners*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Mary Margaret Steedly

National integration is a topic that has long attracted the attention of anthropologists writing about Indonesia. From the 1950s on, social scientists have been both fascinated and repelled by Indonesian state efforts to weld the disparate social, political, and linguistic elements of a diverse and geographically dispersed population into something resembling a "people." In the immediate post-Independence years, this nation-building effort appeared as a heroic if troubling undertaking: the attempt to forge a national consciousness where none had previously existed, and with little in the way of obvious raw materials for such a construction. A shared national language, spoken by only a small percentage of the population; the aesthetic "peaks" of local cultures and lifeways called upon to shore up the political ideology of a charismatic leader; and a grandly imagined history of precolonial unity were all brought into play in the effort to hold together the newly recognized nation-state. The attempt would have seemed both preposterous and quixotic, except for its apparent success.

In the 1970s, anthropologists looked at Indonesian national culture as a kind of supplement to the local cultures upon which it parasitically fed, and as an expanding "urban superculture"—a term suggested by Hildred Geertz¹—of Westernized elites as the encroaching vanguard of a global modernity. By the 1980s, the heyday of the New Order, the national culture project was regarded, not just as the inevitable outgrowth of forces of modernization and bureaucratic rationalization, but more cynically as a heinous manipulation and stupefaction of the Indonesian population in the service of a nefarious and brutal political regime. Under the aegis of New Order state ideology, local traditions were replaced by vacuous simulacra—always less than the real thing—such as national theme parks, ethnic music contests, touristic performances and faux rituals, standardized bridal costumes and the like. Traditional artistic genres, customs, spiritual practices, and even languages seemed to be disappearing under the twin forces of modernization and national identity formation. Yet at the same time that they decried the homogenizing of local lifeways, anthropologists were also calling into question the whole notion of tradition, as well as such related "primordial" concepts as culture, ethnicity, and identity. These were increasingly recognized, not as self-evident, bounded entities, but rather as contingent, fluid, and "invented"—indeed as constituted within the very formations of hegemonic authority that appeared to be their antithesis.

Moving outward from the Javanese center, you could almost track the increasingly long arm of the New Order state through ethnographic attention to its cultural effects in increasingly distant places—in Sumatra, Sulawesi, and Borneo, into Eastern Indonesia and Papua. By the early 1990s, when Danilyn Rutherford conducted her fieldwork in Biak, an island district on the north coast of Indonesian New Guinea, the

¹ Hildred Geertz, "Indonesian Cultures and Communities," *Indonesia*, ed. R. McVey (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1963).

New Order was at its peak of power and influence, and its reach seemed just about limitless. *Raiding the Land of the Foreigners*, which was based on that research, was mostly written after Suharto's decline and fall, and, perhaps more significantly, after the July 1998 raising of the Morning Star flag of Papuan independence in the district capital, Biak City. It is thus not surprising that this book marks another profound turn in the study of state and local interactions in Indonesia. Rather than inquiring how a national consciousness has been formed and accepted by Biaks, Rutherford asks the opposite question: How is it that the people of Biak-Numfor have sustained an "anti-national" sentiment while at the same time participating with enthusiasm and much success in the economic and social opportunities provided by New Order institutions?

As anyone who has shopped for postcards in an Indonesian airport can confirm, Papuan people figure prominently in the Indonesian national imagination as the internal "Other," not only the outer limit of national geography, but indeed the primitive limit of human possibility. But as Rutherford insists, Biak is not one of those marginal, isolated areas where state and local understandings confound one another; rather, it was at the time of her research "unusually well integrated into the Indonesian nation-state by many measures" (p. 3). Biaks comprised an educated and well-connected provincial elite. They had been converted to Christianity in the early twentieth century. Biaks enthusiastically attended Indonesian schools, and were generally fluent in the Indonesian language. There was an international airport on Biak Island, and there were ambitious plans to turn the surrounding area into the "next Bali," complete with luxury resorts. The regional infrastructure—electricity, running water, roads—was, if not up to the standard of much of Java, at least comparable to developed rural areas in Sumatra, and improving rapidly. Biaks traveled beyond the province for higher education or work; they joined scout troops and other national organizations; they proudly accepted positions in the civil service. At the time of Rutherford's research, "Indonesia seemed to be making progress toward national integration," and in that effort "Biak-Numfor was clearly doing its small part." However, as she points out, the outcome of national integration is by no means inevitably a consciousness of national belonging. For Biaks, it is the very allure of the foreign that leads to its incorporation within local systems of meaning and exchange, rather than to the incorporation of Biaks within the alien frame of national meaning-systems.

The richness and complexity of Rutherford's fascinating account defy summary, but should attract readers with an interest in Indonesian (or, indeed, Melanesian) cultural politics or in theories of nationalism and political consciousness. Central to her tightly argued analysis is the multivalent Biak term *amber*, which she translates as "foreign."

Let me state the punch line of this study plainly: to the extent that Biaks pursued the foreign as a source of value, prestige, and authority, they managed to participate in national institutions without adopting national points of view. In New Order Biak, the fetishization of the foreign resided in a web of social practices, sacred and banal, in ways of talking about intimacy and history, of producing and transacting objects, and of evaluating speeches, gifts, dances, and songs (p. 4).

Biaks' engagement with the outside world is not a recent phenomenon. Even before the arrival of Dutch colonialists in the mid-nineteenth century, they had by virtue of their relatively accessible coastal location long been seafaring traders and cosmopolitan interlocutors of "big foreigners." The powerful sultanates of Tidore and Ternate were sources of noble titles, valuable goods that Biaks used in ceremonial exchanges, and a contagious spiritual potency that could be brought home by intrepid voyagers. These objects and attributes were signs of a travelers' prowess, as well as valuable tokens in local systems of status and prestige. For precolonial Biaks, Rutherford argues, "foreignness [was] an attribute of distant polities that individuals could incorporate by way of their exchanges with intimate others." Early Christian missionaries were similarly seen as bearers of a spiritual potency that could be transferred to those around them. New Order Biaks "still seemed capable of absorbing the status, authority, and potential for violence associated with an alien state . . . not by identifying with foreign perspectives but by wearing foreign potency upon their skins" (p. 17). Biaks who bore the new marks of foreign potency—college degrees, civil service jobs, stories and souvenirs of travel to the national capital, and relationships with exotic outsiders—became in the process "big foreigners" themselves.

Rutherford traces the allure of the foreign in a range of contexts: Biak kinship and marriage exchanges, fish-calling rituals, utopian myths and millenarian aspirations, the popularization of local musical genres, the authority of dead mothers, Papuan separatism, and above all the "nationalization of Biak culture" as an ultimately unsuccessful effort to include Biaks within the homogeneous New Order fold. These demonstrate both the historical continuity of local ways of dealing with faraway powers, and the capacity of Biak individuals to enjoy the material advantages of the foreign while at the same time deflecting its demands for submission.

This tendency to incorporate foreign elements in local prestige systems has been described as a general characteristic of Southeast Asian societies, especially maritime communities and their upland dependencies and trade partners. Such incorporations lend themselves to the kind of mismatched understandings that Rutherford describes between Tidoran sultans presuming submissive subjects and Biak envoys "raiding the land of the foreigners" for its unlimited goods. Thus, while Biak is in some ways a limiting case in the study of Indonesian national integration, it also points to a pattern of localizing the foreign that can be identified in many (if not all) parts of the archipelago. We might think of it then, not so much as a case that represents the extreme limit on a continuum of national belonging, but rather as a case that, when studied, offers a possible correction for academic tendencies to overestimate the internalization of state ideology.

In other ways, however, Biak cannot be seen as a representative instance of national integration. Since Papua was incorporated into the Indonesian nation-state only in 1963, the Papuan experience of Indonesian nationhood was almost entirely restricted to the Suharto years, without even the prospect of democratization that other regions experienced in the 1950s. With a largely Christianized local population absorbing growing numbers of migrants from other parts of the archipelago, Biak/Papua's most closely analogous region within Indonesia was East Timor. By the mid-1990s, increasingly outspoken religious leaders and a more open press meant that state violence in areas such as East Timor and Papua were commonly viewed by

educated Christians there and in other parts of Indonesia as religiously motivated. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that Biak anti-nationalism would exceed its slippery accommodations to foreign power and morph into Papuan separatism.

Gramsci's often-cited concept of hegemony may be usefully invoked here.² It is, he writes, "[t]he 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group." It is important to note the irony quotes that qualify the spontaneity of this mass consent, which suggest that such consent is not really spontaneous at all. Behind it stands the "apparatus of state coercive power which . . . enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively." Thus for Gramsci, hegemony's hold over subaltern groups remains partial, neither truly spontaneous nor entirely consensual, and always backed by the anticipatory threat of state violence. Indonesian national integration is not just a matter of collective imagining or of cultural politics; popular consent is—or was—equally determined by the power of the state to enforce it through violence and terror. Rutherford's outstanding ethnography opens the way for a clearer and more complex understanding of the limits of national belonging.

² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 13.