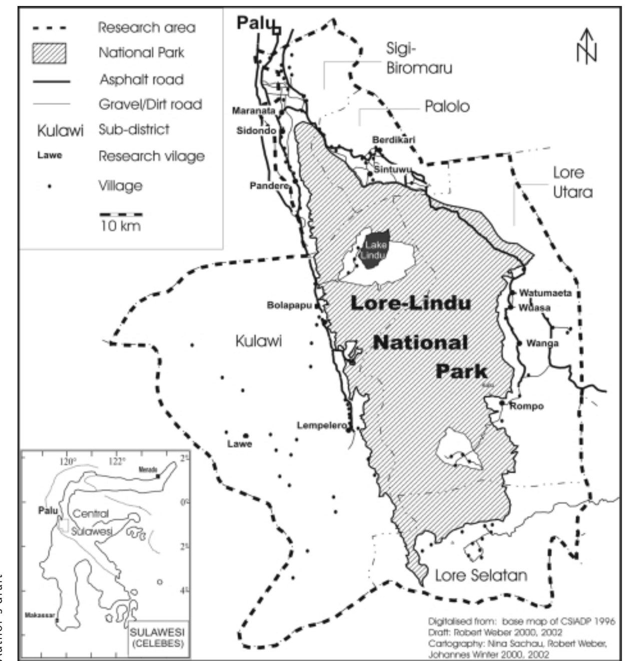
Cultural Landscape in Change

Research > Southeast Asia

During the last one hundred years, the region around Lore Lindu National Park in Central Sulawesi has represented an area in slow transition. A couple of years ago this development changed significantly. Thus, the Park offers an interesting field for scientific research on stability and destabilisation of the margins of one of the few remaining tropical primary forests in Indonesia. As presented below, one field of study which is important for the understanding of present dynamics in the region is the reconstruction of the historical development of cultural landscape since the beginning of the twentieth century.



Our research area

Author's draft

By Robert Weber

During fifteen months of fieldwork, I used mainly qualitative research methods such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews with families and key persons in nine selected villages. These villages are located in four different valleys surrounding Lore Lindu National Park (LLNP) (see map). The villages were selected by a stratified random sampling, including the following three characteristics; population density, ethnic composition, and distance to the national park. The results of the interviews will provide information on the village history, migration patterns, historical, spatial, and functional development of the settlement, internal and external influences and their impacts on settlement and population structure, as well as on land use. Further information gathered at the sub-district, district and province level will allow us to connect the data on the micro (village) level with developments on the macro level, and thus lead to a differentiation of endogenous and exogenous processes that shaped the villages' status quo.

The fieldwork in Lore Lindu region

The Lore Lindu region consists of a national park area of around 231 km^2 that provides habitat for a wide range of endemic flora and fauna. The national park is surrounded by five valleys. The most densely populated Palu valley offers the best infrastructure of the region and was frequented by Arab and Chinese traders long before the Dutch conquest in the early twentieth century. The other valleys, Kulawi, Palolo, Napu, and Bada, remained relatively untouched by external influences and thus were able to conserve their traditional believes, customs, and lifestyle to a certain extent. Up until today, their population has been diverse in terms of local languages.

A first breaking point of the development of cultural landscape was the Dutch incursion into various upland valleys between 1905 and 1908. The colonial rulers introduced main changes in terms of settlement structures, beliefs and economy. However, the Ethical Policy that influenced Dutch colonial policy since 1900 led to a more considerate implementation of colonial changes. People were resettled from the mountains down to the valleys, where new settlements with village structures were established. After the area was 'pacified', missionaries of the Salvation Army respective of the Dutch protestant church entered the valleys and tried to convert the people from their animist believes to Christian religion. In terms of economy, the Dutch influenced local agriculture less intensively than in Java or Sumatra. Large-scale plantations and compulsory labour in agriculture, two attributes of the so-called Cultuurstelsel, were not practiced in Central Sulawesi. In fact, the Lore Lindu region has remained an economic smallholder system up to the present day. The Dutch, however, promoted the cultivation of paddy rice instead of the dry land rice that was traditionally planted in slash-and-burn shifting cultivation. For that reason, a huge irrigation project was established that still guaranties sufficient paddy rice production in the naturally dry Palu valley. In upland areas like the Kulawi valley coffee was introduced to the locals and created the base for cash-crop economy in the area. Following the Dutch, Arab, Chinese, and Bugis (South Sulawesi) traders entered the remote upland valleys and supported the development of a more vital market structure. Road construction programmes to connect the hinterland with Palu were realized using compulsory local labour.

The short period of Japanese rule (1942-45) burdened the local population more than the Dutch influence had. Cotton production and longer working hours on the fields became obligatory for every household. Action against the will of the Japanese was quickly answered with physical punishment.

During the first two decades since the independence of Indonesia, the Lore Lindu area remained in a relatively static situation. However, the rebellion of Kahar Musakar in South Sulawesi and the Permesta rebellion in North Sulawesi in the 1950s led to changes in terms of migration when refugees of the rebellions moved to Central Sulawesi. This time can be regarded as the first period of a greater immigration from other parts of the island. As land was still abundant at that time, these people could easily settle and there were no problems with land distribution.

With the change to Suharto's New Order era, the economic production of food and cash crops was enforced and new local resettlement programmes from remote hillside locations to the plains were implemented. While Napu valley in the East was still lacking sufficient transport infrastructure and thus remained quite scarcely populated, starting in the 1960s Palolo valley was the main area of local immigration, mainly from Kulawi and overpopulated areas along the Palu bay. None of the five valleys surrounding the today's national park developed as fast as Palolo valley where more than half of the villages were founded between 1960 and 1980.

The most far-reaching changes to the cultural landscape took place during the last decade of the twentieth century. Immigration from South Sulawesi, where land scarcity became a major problem, had already begun on a considerable scale during the 1980s. The main impact of this immigration was the introduction of cacao and the beginning of land sales from locals to the mostly financially better-off Bugis migrants. Due to the boom of cacao prices during the 1990s, immigration from the south of Sulawesi reached a peak. This was mainly the case in Palolo and Napu valley where settlement, population, and climatic conditions offered better opportunities for cacao farmers than in other areas of the region. Besides, inter-island transmigration programmes from Java and Bali raised the number of population, mostly in Napu valley. Land sales led to new forms of economic relationships like wage-labour. Furthermore, locals started to encroach on the national park area in order to substitute the land that they had sold before.

The Lore Lindu region still can be regarded as an area in fast transition. The present results of the research on cultural landscape and the projections for future development (e.g. effects of modernization, revitalization of a conservative regionalism, local conflicts in neighbouring Poso district) of this region serve as a base for further research in cultural and social geography. <

Dipl.-Geogr. Robert Weber is researcher of the STORMA programme and PhD student at the University of Göttingen (Germany), Dept. of Geography, Division of Cultural and Social Geography. He deals with research on migration and ethnicity in Southeast Asia.
rweber@gwdg.de

Adat dress of Kulawi nobles

Robert Weber

Info >

My fieldwork is part of the Indonesian-German interdisciplinary research programme STORMA (Stability Of Rainforest Margin Areas). For detailed information on our sub-project A1, supervised by Prof. Werner Kreisel and Dr Heiko Faust visit www.geogr.uni-goettingen.de/kus/sfb552/A1.htm

The Seven-Word Controversy

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Amendments to several crucial articles of the 1945 constitution topped the agenda at the most recent session of the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly (MPR, *Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*). Following upon lesser amendments (in 1999, 2000, and 2001), the 2002 annual session, held 1–10 August, tackled such vital issues as the authority of the MPR and the president; education; and religion. Particularly sensitive were proposals to amend Article 29, which would redefine the relationship between religion and state. Controversy raged over inclusion of the so-called 'seven words' of the 1945 Jakarta Charter ('*dengan kewajiban menjalankan syari'at Islam bagi para pemeluknya*' [with the obligation for adherents of the faith to carry out Islamic sharia]), advocated by some Islamic parties, organizations and movements.[1]

By Moch Nur Ichwan

Three Islamic political factions[2] and one ultra-reformist Islamic organization[3] alone advocated the enshrinement of Islamic sharia in the constitution. In this they were opposed by the 'secular' factions.[4] Rejection of the 'seven words' also came from the largest Islamic organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. Former President Abdurrahman Wahid opposed altering Article 29 on the grounds that it was the creation of the founding fathers of the Indonesian nation state. Echoing the 1945 statement of his father Wahid Hasyim, he argued that the most important question was not 'what ... shall be the place of Islam [in the state]', but rather, 'By what means shall we assure the place of all religions in independent Indonesia? What we need most of all at this time is the indissoluble unity of the nation.'[5] Later, Amien Rais suggested that the religion article should not be amended. A poll by *Tempo Interaktif*, conducted 17–24 May 2002, found 52 per cent of respondents opposed to any amendments to the religion article. While 44 per cent were found to be in favour, they were divided as to its formulation.

Debating the religion article

Anticipating deadlock, meetings to discuss 'crucial articles' of the constitution were held before the annual session of the MPR. Initiated by Islamic parties, participants at these meetings were accused of creating an 'Islamic caucus', a charge they denied. Participants supported amending Article 29 but did not agree on a formulation. The PPP, PBB, PNU (Nahdatul Ummah Party), and PK (Justice Party) proposed the inclusion of the seven words of the Jakarta Charter, while the PAN and PKB had their own versions (later, the PKB changed its position to defend the original text). The participation of the PKB in the meetings illustrated the split of the 'old friendship' between the 'traditional' Muslims (NU-PKB) and the nationalists (PDIP), due to the latter's participation in the impeachment of Abdurrahman Wahid from the presidency. Anticipating the deterioration of relations, Megawati's husband, Taufik Kiemas, visited Wahid, the head of the consultative body of the PKB, stressing the compatibility of 'nationalism and Islam'.

Meetings were then widened to include non-Islamic parties, such as PDIP and Golkar, defusing the issue of the so-called 'Islamic caucus'. As in the earlier meetings, the parties discussed

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the crucial articles, including, of course, the religion article. No agreement was reached except that, as far as possible, deadlock should be avoided at the annual session. Both Islamic and secular parties formulated alternative amendments to the religion article before the annual session.

Article 29: 1

Alternative one: The state is based upon the belief in one God (original text).
Alternative two: The state is based upon the belief in one God with the obligation to implement Islamic sharia for the adherents of the religion.
Alternative three: The state is based upon the belief in one God with the obligation to implement religious teachings for the adherents of each religion.

The proponents of the Jakarta Charter supported the second alternative. The reformation faction supported the third alternative. Along with PDIP and Golkar, the PKB supported the original version. In the midst of the annual session, anti- and pro-amendment movements emerged inside and outside the MPR. Anti-amendment forces outside the MPR were spearheaded by retired military elites and PDIP members; inside the MPR, by PDIP legislators. It appeared that the PDIP was conducting a 'politics of double faces' with official statements supporting amendment alongside unofficial pronouncements suggesting otherwise.

Outside the MPR, supporters of the amendment demanded the inclusion of the seven words of the Jakarta Charter. Opposition to the idea also came from moderate Muslims, nationalists, and adherents of other religions. The latter argued that the religion article is a national consensus that should not be dominated by any particular religion. Nurcholish Madjid, a prominent Muslim thinker, said the inclusion of the Jakarta Charter would allow the state to intervene into religious space. For the same reason, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah demanded the original version of the religion article be maintained.

Support for the amendment of Article 29 inside the MPR weakened before its discussion in Commission A, which was responsible for the amendment of this article. The head of the MPR, Amien Rais, advocated 'going back to the original text'. The PPP, moreover, began to waver in its support. This weakening was condemned by proponents of Islamic sharia inside and outside the MPR. Strong support came, in the end, only from the PBB and PDU factions. When Commission A failed to reach agreement on amending the religion article, the issue was brought into the plenary session on 10 August, resulting in the preservation of the original Article 29. The PBB and PDU factions and some Islamic parties and movements vowed to continue their struggle into the future.

This was not the first taste of failure for the proponents of Islamic sharia in Indonesia. The seven words of the Jakarta Charter, issued on 22 June 1945, were then 'amended' because of the protest of the 'people of the Eastern Part of Indonesia'. In the Constituent Assembly between 1956 and 1959, the debate about Islamic sharia reoccurred. Sukarno, however, issued a presidential decree in 1959 declaring, *inter alia*, the re-establishment of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. The discussion on Islamic sharia and the Jakarta Charter was then officially closed. Finally, during the New Order, Suharto issued Law No. 8 of 1985 on mass organizations, disallowing Islamic sharia and other non-Pancasila ideologies.

The Jakarta Post, 7 August 2002

'Rejecting the amendment = traitor of the nation.' The pro-amendment movements outside the MPR building.

The 2002 annual session of the MPR, which, it is expected, witnessed the last of the constitutional amendments, showed the religion article to be the most controversial and sensitive in the Indonesian constitution. Any effort at Islamization (or 'religionization') of Article 29 would affect relations between religion and state, and between religions in the country. The adoption of the article would be deadly expensive, as the plurality of Indonesian society and of Muslims themselves, many of whom rejected sectarianism and anti-pluralism, would be at stake. The maintenance of the religion article is, indeed, not the failure of Muslims in the country, but rather their great success in maintaining their identity as adherents of a moderate, tolerant Islam. <

Moch Nur Ichwan, MA *is a PhD candidate at the IIAS within the framework of the research project 'Islam in Indonesia'. He concentrates on Indonesian state discourse on Islam both during and beyond the Suharto years.*
M.N.Ichwan@Let.Leidenuniv.nl
mn.ichwan@eudoramail.com

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1. The present article is based on the observations of a number of newspapers, magazines, and online media, particularly *Kompas, Republika, Media Indonesia, The Jakarta Post, Tempo, Tempo Interaktif,* and *Gatra*, published between 20 May and 20 August 2002.
2. The United Development Party (PPP), the Crescent Star Party (PBB), and the Daulatul Ummah faction (PDU)
3. The Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia (DDII).
4. The Golkar Party (PG), Indonesian Democratic Struggle Party (PDIP), National Awakening Party (PKB), Loving Nation Democratic Party (PDKP), Indonesian Nationhood Coalition faction (FKKI), Regional Representatives (FUD), and the Military-Police faction (FTNI/Polri)
5. Cited in Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation*, The Hague: Van Hoeve [etc.] (1958), p. 189.

Power, Religion and Terror in Indonesia

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Why has there been so much conflict and violence in Indonesia over the past few years? A deceptively simple answer is that Indonesia has been experiencing intense power struggles since the demise of former President Suharto. Conflict in Indonesia is often related to power. Just as conflict is extremely diverse, power, too, has many meanings and many manifestations in Indonesian society. Conflict over power does not necessarily result in violence, let alone in an epidemic of bloodshed. Moreover, power conflicts are not the cause of all violence. However, this study explores the hypothesis that particular conceptions, symbols, institutionalizations, and concrete practices of power, play a major role in the generation and suppression of violence in Indonesia.

By Bernard Adeney-Risakotta

Since the Bali terrorist bombs of 12 October 2002, a great deal of attention has been focused on the connection between religion and violence. Religion is a powerful force in Indonesia and has played a part in much of the violence, as well as in attempts to stop it. Over the past four years, terror has become ubiquitous in Indonesian society and frequently linked to religious communities. However, religion is never an autonomous force that acts independently from other factors. Religion is integral to power in Indonesia, both in its positive and negative manifestations. Violent conflict in Indonesia is usually precipitated by political, economic, and social changes that are influenced by volatile tensions between traditional power structures, religious world views, and modern institutions. Since virtually all Indonesians are religious, violence often appeals to religion for justification. However, violence also includes profound cultural elements that are embedded in the traditions, stories, rituals, and *adat* (traditional law) institutions that are part of the identity of the people.

In so far as violence is connected with power (as opposed to psychosis, rage, frustration, hatred, ideology, misunderstanding, principles, or more generalized social pathologies) this study is motivated by the desire to understand how power is generated and utilized in Indonesia. My theory suggests that a fundamental form of power lies within the people, as distinct from the elite. Recent events demonstrate that great creative and destructive potential is located within the people, whereas their leaders are generally impotent. Violence destroys power. 'Violence can always destroy power; out of the barrel of a gun grows the most effective command, resulting in the most instant and perfect obedience. What never can grow out of it is power' (Arendt 1970:53). State use of violence in certain areas of Indonesia is always both an indication and cause of the weakness of the government in those same areas. The more the state uses violence, the weaker the government.

State violence may also destroy the power that lies in the people, especially if they respond with violence, as in Aceh, and for many years in East Timor. Yet, state violence can also galvanize the people's power, especially if the people are unified in non-violent resistance, as finally occurred in many parts of Indonesia, including East Timor. Governmental power is dependent on the power that lies within the people. This approach distinguishes power from domination. I understand power as the ability of the people to achieve their own goals (for better or worse). Government is a powerful modern institution through which the people hope to achieve their goals. However, power in Indonesian society is also generated and channelled by other modern, religious, and cultural practices and institutions.

My research explores the thesis that we need a new theoretical framework for understanding power and violence in Indonesia that moves beyond simple categories of antagonistic groups. Different patterns of meaning, practice, and discourse provide a more useful analytic tool for understanding power and violence than the now classic tradition of dividing Indonesia (or Java) into religious, social, or political groupings. Power and violence in Indonesia cannot be understood within a Weberian framework of social evolution from traditional to modern, nor through an ideal-type dichotomy between Java and the West.

There are three major sets of symbol systems, institutions, and practices in Indonesia that interpenetrate each other and form the conscious and unconscious identity of all Indonesians. All three are so powerful and all-pervasive that none of them can overthrow the other two or claim the exclusive allegiance of any particular group. These three networks of meaning are not necessarily incompatible with each other, but they contain many elements of incommensurability such as to generate distinctive and competing worlds of discourse. Virtually all Indonesians live, think, feel, and participate in three different conceptual worlds, which are often synthesized or integrated with each other, but just as often separated and dichotomized. Each of these frameworks of meaning has generated their own institutions, practices, and structures of power. These three Indonesian worlds can be defined as: modernity, religion, and the culture of the ancestors. Through my work I investigate how each of these symbol systems generates or controls power, and how they become enmeshed in violence.

Indonesians cannot be divided into three groups: those who are modern, religious, or traditional. All Indonesians are modern in the sense that they are shaped by modern institutions, ideas, and practices. The remotest farmer knows the exchange rate of the dollar and depends on globally determined prices, modern transportation, and modern ideals of progress, education, and rights. Similarly, all Indonesians are religious. Religious institutions, ideas, and practices shape the identities and practices of all, not least of which includes those who resist the dominant trends in religion. Equally, all Indonesians are shaped by the culture of their ancestors. Culture is not a static, ancient set of ideas, practices, and institutions, but rather an evolving, dynamic power that determines the life style and perspective of all Indonesians. For example, of the three main institutions of law in Indonesia, secular, religious, and *adat*, the most powerful of the three is *adat*. I explore the thesis that the relationship between these three distinct webs of meaning is a useful key for understanding how power operates in the society and how violence is generated out of the tensions between all three. Violence is not primarily caused by evil people, but rather by conflict within and between three different kinds of structures of power.

During my past eleven years of teaching and research in Indonesia, I have also been formed by these three worlds of discourse. Most social scientific studies of Indonesian society assume a fundamentally modern, Western epistemology in which the cultures, religions, politics, and history of Indonesia are viewed as objects to be studied that are fundamentally different, or even alien from the researcher. Anthropologists try to see the world 'from the native's point of view', but that world remains eternally distant (Geertz 1976). Social science assumes a modern understanding of scientific knowledge, which takes culture and religion as objects of research. Even Indonesians are taught to radically separate their culture and religion from modern modes of scientific investigation.

In contrast, this research project is written from within the epistemological assumptions and perspectives of all three of these different worlds of discourse. It is a modern analysis of Indonesian identity, power, and violence, which adopts many Indonesian, religious, and cultural assumptions about the nature of reality. I argue for a new theory of power, which operates within these three different worlds of Indonesian discourse. Perhaps as many as 100,000 people have died during the past four years through violence related to ethnic, religious, economic, and political conflicts in Indonesia. In a country known for its gentle culture, high level of tolerance, and warm hospitality, what triggered such an orgy of death? <

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Dr Bernard Adeney-Risakotta *was a fellow at IIAS Amsterdam from October 2001-August 2002. He has now returned to Yogyakarta, Indonesia where he is Assistant Director of the Graduate Program and Professor of Social Ethics at Duta Wacana Christian University. His current research is in the study of religion and society in Indonesia.*
berniear@ukdw.ac.id

Note >

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