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Indonesian political exiles in the Netherlands after 1965

Postcolonial nationalists in an era of transnationalism

DAVID T. HILL

ABSTRACT

This article presents brief life stories of select Indonesians who were forced into exile by the Suharto regime after the 1965 National Tragedy in Indonesia. It focuses on staunch nationalist exiles who were rendered stateless by the self-proclaimed “New Order” for refusing to accept the overthrow of President Sukarno and declare loyalty to the military regime. Faced with a life in exile, they sought refuge in the former colonial nation of the Netherlands. After exploring a brief history of exile in the bilateral relationship, it explores the choices made by select individuals who moved to the Netherlands from a variety of other locations of initial refuge. It then explores the frameworks of support which bolster the exiles’ sense of identity as Indonesian (trans)nationalists who reside in the Netherlands, before finally locating the experiences of the exiles in the context of their changing engagement with their homeland.

KEYWORDS

G30S; PKI; migration; refugee; Cold War; asylum; New Order; Sukarno; Suharto; citizenship.

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1 INTRODUCTION¹

Having initially appeared in “the lexicon of migration studies only in the early 1990s”,² by 2009 Steven Vertovec could declare that the term transnationalism “seems to be everywhere, at least in social science”.³ In the wake of World War II and the global dismantling of colonial empires, increased attention has been paid to the causes and consequences of mass migration and population movement upon the societies from which people depart and to which they move. Whether the motivation be voluntary emigration, forced expulsion or the flight for safe refuge, the process of physical and psychological relocation presents enormous challenges to individuals and communities involved.

As Vertovec has alluded, debates on the seemingly unstoppable march of economic globalization in the twenty-first century have paralleled increasingly nuanced analysis of the experience of individuals and populations having open to them the possibility of multiple, simultaneous, and coexisting national identities and loyalties. These can be transnational and multifarious. Perhaps the most common cases analysed have been those in which economic advancement is the primary motivation for mobility, those often dubbed “economic migrants” or “guest workers”, whose national identity and loyalty can remain with the home-state rather than the host, where residence can be regarded (at least initially) as temporary. Refugees from war, ethnic and religious conflict, or natural disasters constitute another often-discussed category of people whose relocation from home to host country can be forced and unwelcomed.

This article examines the nature of transnationalism in relation to political exiles from Indonesia who arrived in the Netherlands as a consequence of the military takeover of their homeland by forces under Major-General Suharto after September 1965. When Suharto moved to seize power in late 1965 and began a pogrom against the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), and more broadly leftists and supporters of President Sukarno, there were thousands of Indonesian nationals overseas working, studying, or travelling who questioned whether it would be safe to return to their homeland.⁴ They were scattered across the globe, with substantial populations in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the People’s Republic of China (PRC), United States

¹ As I am neither Indonesian nor Dutch, I claim no personal experiential insight into this complex transnational relationship. In my research on this topic, the focus has been on the experiences and perspectives of those who were Indonesia-born rather than Netherlands-born. I am deeply indebted to the dozens of exiles who granted me interviews, sharing their experiences with me. I want to thank Fridus Steijlen for comments on an earlier draft and to acknowledge the enormous contribution to research on the matters relating to 1965 in Indonesia made by the Perpustakaan Online Genosida 1965-1966, maintained by Andreas Iswinarto at: <https://19651966perpustakaanonline.wordpress.com/>; sighted 2-5-2022. Numerous references used in this article were identified from this source.

² Thomas Faist and Basak Bilecen (2019: 499).

³ Vertovec (2009: 1).

⁴ For a general overview of the circumstances of Indonesian political exiles after 1965, see Hill 2010a.

of America (USA) with smaller numbers in the Middle East, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere across Asia (including North Vietnam and North Korea).⁵ In a process of political “screening” by the incoming regime conducted at the various Indonesian embassies abroad, they were interrogated about any leftist connections and required to declare loyalty to the incoming regime. Those who demurred were stripped of their passports and citizenship, consequently becoming stateless political exiles abroad.⁶ These exiles included members of the PKI, along with fellow-travellers, leftist-nationalists, Sukarnoists, and others more broadly opposed to Suharto’s self-proclaimed “New Order” regime.

While these exiles included those as diverse as travelling cultural performance troupes and members of diplomatic missions abroad, the majority were students studying overseas on a variety of scholarships from either the home or a host government. They were often referred to as “mahid” (*mahasiswa ikatan dinas*, Civil Service bonded students) as they were required to undertake a period of employment for the state on their return home. In the highly polarized atmosphere of the Cold War, it was often deduced by the New Order that an individual’s political orientation aligned with the political ideology of the country in which they were studying. Therefore, a student in the USA was more likely to be above suspicion, while those in the USSR or the PRC were assumed to be leftist. This was despite the fact that, in the early 1960s when the Sukarno government was pursuing a declared neutral and open foreign policy attempting to balance relations with both sides of the Cold War divide, young Indonesians eager to study abroad were often willing to accept an international scholarship from whichever government offered, irrespective of their ideological inclination. However, in general terms, after the rise of Suharto, anti-communist students were confident of returning to Indonesia while those critical of the military take-over, particularly if they happened to be studying in socialist or communist states, were faced with little alternative to exile.

No precise statistics are available of the number of Indonesians who were forced into exile after September 1965, but there were at least several hundred and when families were included it could have been over a thousand.⁷ For many if not most, the decades after 1965 involved a series of relocations from the country of initial residence, through transit countries, until reaching final re-settlement. For example, many Indonesians living in a wide range of

⁵ For further information on Indonesian political exiles in particular countries, see Hill (2022) for North Korea; Rika Theo (2018), Taomo Zhou (2019b), and Hill (2020) for PRC; Hill (2014) for USSR; Abdul Ghani Aziiz (2020); Modelia Novinta Desweriel (2021) for Czech Republic.

⁶ On the process by which Indonesians abroad became stateless, see Ratna Saptari (2019).

⁷ In 1993 Suparna Sastra Diredja estimated there were about 500-600, of whom over 20 had already died (Hill 2010a: 48, note 71). He wanted exiles in China and the Netherlands to collect and publish details, but they were resistant to any such exposure (Hill 2010a: 39-40, note 74). In his Amsterdam documentation known as PERDOL, Sarmadji kept details of exiles whose passing was made known to him, but these would constitute only a limited proportion of the total.

countries in September 1965 subsequently gravitated to the PRC, where they received state hospitality for years. From here several dozen spent extended periods with leftist forces in Burma or North Vietnam, often in the hope (unfulfilled, as it transpired) that the skills they learnt might eventually enable them to overthrow the military regime in their homeland.⁸ Rather than return home the vast majority of exiles gradually moved on to states in Western Europe where they finally settled. The largest proportion of these exiles found safe haven in the Netherlands where they “became an important part of a wider spectrum of Indonesian diasporic subjects” (Dragojlovic 2016: 59). It is these Indonesian exiles who are at the centre of this study, with focus on the initial generation of exiles (rather than second or subsequent generations).⁹

After presenting an overview of how exile might be considered in the history of relations between the Netherlands and Indonesia, we shall explore in more detail the life stories of a selection of post-1965 political exiles illustrative of the broader population of exiles who came to reside in the Netherlands, in order to then evaluate the factors which lead to them making this choice to seek refuge in the former colonial state. Finally, we will examine what might be described as the exiles’ particular transnational expression of Indonesian nationalism.

2 BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF EXILE TO THE NETHERLANDS

The history of Dutch colonialism in the archipelago now known as Indonesia is well documented and need not be recounted here, except to highlight the practice of exiling locals who resisted Dutch occupation to a variety of locations across the Dutch colonial empire including South Africa and Sri Lanka. Some members of the anti-colonial resistance were despatched to the Netherlands itself as punishment.¹⁰ The nationalist leaders Soewardi Soeryaningrat (later called Ki Hadjar Dewantara), E.F.E. Douwes Dekker (also known as Setiabudi), and Cipto Mangunkusumo, for example, all of whom were exiled to the Netherlands in 1913, experienced their time there to be filled with “misery and want”.¹¹ The Netherlands was also the location for the establishment of “the first explicitly Indonesian-nationalist organization, the *Perhimpunan Indonesia*”, despite being “half a globe away from the Netherlands Indies” (Benedict Anderson 1992: 3). Perhaps an example of Lord Acton’s maxim that “exile is the nursery of nationality”.¹²

⁸ Those spending time in Burma included Ibarruri Putri Alam, Mawie Ananta Jonie, Syarkawi Manap, and Warsito Darmosukarto, while those in North Vietnam included Asahan Alham (Aidit), Farida Ishaja, Syarkawi Manap, and Z. Afif.

⁹ Dragojlovic (2010, 2016) provides a valuable insight into the changing relationship between specifically Balinese political exiles and the broader ethnic Balinese community in the Netherlands, identifying many of the issues raised in this current article.

¹⁰ See, for example, Kerry Ward (2008) and contributions by Ronit Ricci, Sri Margana, Timo Kaartinen, and Jean Gelman Taylor in: Ronit Ricci, Anand A. Yang, and Kieko Matteson (2016).

¹¹ Cipto Mangunkusumo quoted in: Kees van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2017: 71) as cited in: Didem Gül Kizir (2021: 27).

¹² Lord Acton (1967: 146) cited in: Anderson (1992: 2).

Many more people from the Netherlands East Indies came to the metropole by choice to study prior to Indonesia declaring its independence in August 1945. After Indonesian independence, significant numbers of the population who identified with a Dutch heritage or were sympathetic to Dutch cultural, political, or economic interests relocated to the Netherlands, with some 300,000 people making that journey between 1945 and 1956.¹³ In addition, many Indonesians continued to venture to the Netherlands for higher education during their nation's early decades, with more than 1500 making that passage in a single year.¹⁴

As alluded to earlier, during his presidency Sukarno encouraged bilateral educational arrangements to enable Indonesian students to study abroad, with the intention of bolstering the nation's intellectual capital. Mostly with scholarships from host countries, Indonesians studied in nations across the Cold War divide. The circumstances of such individuals changed dramatically in 1965 when Major-General Suharto took power following a putsch by the 30th September Movement (*Gerakan Tiga puluh September, G30S*), blamed over the following decades on the PKI.¹⁵ Under suspicion were any Indonesians residing in, or aligned with, left-leaning countries. This potentially included public servants such as diplomats, along with members of cultural or political delegations then travelling abroad. In short, the political rupture in 1965 resulted in doubt being cast on any Indonesian who for whatever reason was living in a country regarded by Suharto's self-proclaimed "New Order" as unsympathetic.

At the time of the political rupture referred to as the National Tragedy of 1965 in Indonesia, the number of Netherlands residents who had some previous association or identification with Indonesia was substantial, in the vicinity of half a million out of a total population of about 12.8 million.¹⁶ Of any country outside of Indonesia, it was the Netherlands which had the largest population with personal, cultural or hereditary linkages to Indonesia. Perhaps it should not be surprising that, faced with the prospect of separation from their homeland for an indeterminable duration, a substantial proportion of the Indonesian exiles scattered across the globe eventually chose to relocate to the Netherlands rather than alternative states.

¹³ Yumi Kitamura (2017: 26) cites J.H. Kraak (1958: 29). Kitamura pays particular attention to the case of those of Chinese ethnicity. For a more comprehensive analysis of the Netherlands-based population with links to Indonesia, see Evert van Imhoff and Gijs Beets (2004).

¹⁴ Farabi Fakhri (2020: 94) notes that "In the academic year 1952-1953, 1,540 students from Indonesia went to study in Dutch colleges and universities, compared to just eight Indonesian students who studied in Paris".

¹⁵ On the 30 September 1965 and its brutal aftermath in Indonesia, see Jess Melvin (2018, particularly pp. 2-6). Zhou argues "On the basis of newly available Chinese language materials, it is highly likely that the 30 September Movement was plotted by a secret bureau of the PKI, and that the plot was kept obscured from the rest of the party members, excluding a few top leaders" (2013: 17).

¹⁶ These are approximations. Van Imhoff and Beets (2004: 52, Figure 1), gives a 1968 figure of 488,000 (Indo-)Dutch, 26,000 "naturalized" and 25,000 Moluccans in the Netherlands, while <https://countryeconomy.com/demography/population/netherlands?year=1968> gives a total population of 12,798,346 for that year.

That said, it would be a mistake to consider the Indonesian exiles a homogenous community. Even within the membership of the once tightly-knit Indonesian Communist Party, as I have noted elsewhere, “relentless vitriol and ideological dispute over decades between the Moscow-based ‘Overseas Committee of the PKI’ (CL-PKI) and the Beijing-based ‘Delegation of the Central Committee of the PKI’ (*Delegasi CC-PKI*) ensured the PKI in exile remained hopelessly divided across ideological lines” (Hill 2020: 348-349). Given that the exiles included a vast spectrum outside of the PKI, including Sukarnoists, non-affiliated nationalists and other anti-New Order activists, it is unsurprising that exiles reflect a diverse range of backgrounds and political positions.

3 ACADEMIC INTEREST IN INDONESIAN POLITICAL EXILES TO THE NETHERLANDS

During the New Order (1965-1998), there was little if any discussion about political exiles, either at home or abroad. Indonesian embassies overseas, including in the Netherlands, attempted to cordon off and ostracize from Indonesian community events any political exiles residing in their jurisdiction. Such individuals were *personae non grata*. Since the fall of Suharto in May 1998, and particularly under the more sympathetic approach taken by President Abdurrahman Wahid (in office 20 October 1999 – 23 July 2001), such exclusion has been relaxed and exiles generally feel welcome in both the embassies and the broader Indonesian diasporic communities, by whom they are often regarded as sources of considerable first-hand local knowledge and linguistic expertise, the fruit of their long period of residence, social, and cultural adaptability.¹⁷

Increasing interaction between the exiles and Indonesian students living temporarily in the Netherlands has resulted in a number of relevant theses being written in Dutch universities, most notably Agnes Theodora Gurning (2011), Bambang Alfred Sipayung (2011), and Ibnu Nadzir Daraini (2017). In a similar vein, the contact between Indonesian political exiles and postgraduates has encouraged an interest in the experience of exile in transit countries, such as the People’s Republic of China (Theo 2018) and more recently in other European host states, for example, in the Czech Republic (Sipayung 2011; Aziiz 2020; Desweriel 2021). The International People’s Tribunal investigating responsibility for the massacres of 1965-1966 in Indonesia (IPT65), held in The Hague in November 2015, also highlighted the suffering of exiles, several of whom gave testimony at the Tribunal, stimulating further academic research (in particular Saptari 2019). Furthermore, over the past decade, we have seen a growing appreciation and analysis by Indonesians of the experience of political exile, extending both to journalistic and photographic studies of the exiles (Rosa Panggabean 2014), collective biographies (Martin Aleida 2017), academic theses (Rizki Solehudin 2017), and even a feature film (Angga Dwimas Sasongko 2016), frequently

¹⁷ Saptari (2019) discusses the various steps taken by the Wahid and subsequent governments (with declining levels of enthusiasm) towards solving the longstanding legal issues preventing exiles regaining Indonesian citizenship.

with a particular fascination for the question of the national allegiances and loyalties of the exiles.¹⁸ I acknowledge the debt of this present article, which is by its nature something of a survey of past writing, to all such previous material, upon which it draws heavily.

4 INDIVIDUAL BACKGROUNDS, PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

In general members of the Indonesian exile community had an average of fifteen years sojourn as exiles in various Asian countries before making it to their final place of refuge in Europe (Henri Chambert-Loir 2017: 89). Hence, the experiences they carried to the Netherlands were often very diverse, spread across a wide variety of transit states, cultures, and languages.¹⁹ As Sipayung has noted, under an 1848 law, inhabitants of Dutch colonies, such as the Netherlands East Indies, were deemed citizens of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (2011: 18). Until this law was changed in 1985, Indonesian exiles who had been born in the Netherlands East Indies prior to Dutch recognition of Indonesian independence in 1949, could gain residence and citizenship without the need to present a claim for political asylum. Given the staunch nationalist views of such exiles, they faced a particularly bitter irony if opting for this path to secure residence. For those who had participated in the physical struggle to expel the Dutch colonial power from their archipelago, it was deeply painful to argue that they were, in law, Dutch citizens rather than nationals of an independent Indonesia who had been rendered stateless by their own government. This sub-group of the exiles perhaps most dramatically and tragically exemplifies the quandary of those who might be dubbed post-colonial nationalists, that is, those who maintained a deep and passionate nationalism for their homeland while having to seek safety and refuge in their former colonial state.

After the 1985 legal change this avenue was closed and Indonesians arriving from transit states had to apply for political asylum, with all the bureaucratic burdens which such a path imposed. While exiles in this latter category did not base their case for asylum on having been born in a Dutch colony, they nonetheless benefitted from what Sipayung describes as a “special status compared to other migrants” as the Dutch government “considered them as more Dutch compared to other migrants” (2011: 18).

While the Indonesian exile community in the Netherlands is too substantial and diverse to be covered by sweeping generalizations, some select individuals illustrate the complexity of the exiles’ relationship to and adjustment in, their

¹⁸ This is particularly the case with Solehudin (2017) which endeavours specifically to assess the exiles’ sense of nationalism on the basis of photographs of them in Panggabean (2014). In addition to these works by Indonesians, there have been numerous studies by non-Indonesians including Chambert-Loir (2016b), Dragojlovic (2010, 2016), Vanessa Hearman (2010), and Zhou (2019b).

¹⁹ Kitamura (2017: 29) estimates that more than 5,000 Chinese Indonesians left Indonesia for the Netherlands because of the 30 September 1965 event (some via transit states). However, our focus in this discussion remains upon Indonesian nationals who were already abroad in September 1965 rather than those fleeing subsequently.

former colonial state, all while maintaining a heartfelt nationalist loyalty to an Indonesia which had cast them adrift.

Of five Indonesian ambassadors appointed by Sukarno who went into exile rather than return home, three chose to live their last years in the Netherlands.²⁰ Most notable was the former Indonesian ambassador to the People's Republic of China and Mongolia, Djawoto (Tuban, 10 August, 1906 – Amsterdam, 24 September, 1992) who had stood down from his position on 16 April 1966 to protest the New Order's grab for power. Instead, he returned to his previous position as general secretary of the Afro-Asian Journalists' Association (Persatuan Wartawan Asia Afrika, PWAA), then based in Beijing, gaining asylum in China, where he remained until around 1981. He then relocated to Holland, where he lived until his death in September 1992, aged 86.²¹ Prior to Indonesian independence when he entered journalism, Djawoto had been a schoolteacher for fifteen years, mastering both Dutch and English. Former editor-in-chief of the national news agency ANTARA, chair of the Indonesian Journalists' Association (Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia, PWI) and member of parliament, he was regarded as extremely socially accomplished and well-respected across the entire exile community, mixing easily with all the exile factions in the Netherlands (Sarmadji 2009). It was a measure of that respect and popularity that about 600 people, including a large percentage of the exile community, attended his funeral (Sarmadji 2008).

Sharing a somewhat similar background was the former Indonesian ambassador to Mali, Suraedi Tahsin Sandjadirdja (Pandeglang, 6 July, 1922 – Amsterdam, 25 February, 2003), known as S. ("Edy") Tahsin.²² During the physical revolution in 1945 Tahsin was involved in setting up the daily newspaper *Berita Indonesia* (Indonesian News), a fledgling journalism academy and the Indonesian National Press Service (INPS) news agency. He is perhaps better known for his role in establishing the daily *Bintang Timur* (Eastern Star) and the Afro-Asian Journalists' Association prior to being appointed Ambassador to Mali by President Sukarno in 1965. After the rise of the New Order, Tahsin brought his family first to Paris and then for ten years to China, before finally gaining political asylum in the Netherlands. There, with his wife Els and fellow exile journalist Ibrahim Isa, he founded a book shop and publishing venture "Manus Amici", which published the Dutch translations of major novels by Indonesian author and former political prisoner, Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

A former colleague of Djawoto involved in the global transmission of Indonesia's August 1945 Declaration of Independence and the subsequent establishment of the national news agency ANTARA was Sukrisno (died

²⁰ In addition, the former Indonesian Ambassador to Sri Lanka, M. Ali Chanafiah, opted for asylum in Sweden (after many years in the USSR) before managing to return to Indonesia prior to his death; and the former Indonesian Ambassador to Cuba, A.M. Hanafi, gained asylum in France, opening an Indonesian restaurant there in 1978.

²¹ There are conflicting dates for his move to the Netherlands, for example, Mira Wijaya Kusuma (2006) gives 1979, while Anon (2015) states 1981.

²² On Tahsin, see Bonnie Triyana 2007.

6 March 1999 in Amstelveen), who also helped set up the agency's New York office. During the first half of the 1960s he served as ambassador to Romania for five years and was subsequently posted as ambassador to Vietnam, where he was when the 30 September Movement struck. In 1966, he was summoned to a "briefing" in Jakarta by Foreign Minister Adam Malik, which he declined to attend, fearing arrest for his pro-Sukarno sympathies. After writing a letter of protest to the Indonesian government regarding the treatment of leftists, whom he urged be given to a fair trial before any punishment, he stepped aside from his post and opted for exile. Like so many other anti-Suharto exiles, initially he went to China which provided a site for the consolidation of the leftist opposition to the New Order, under the aegis of the Delegation of the Central Committee Indonesian Communist Party, under Jusuf Adjitorop.²³ There Sukrisno was joined by his wife and children, who were able to depart Indonesia with the assistance of friends. His status as a former ambassador was recognized in the level of comfort provided for him by the Chinese government but, after ten years, with the death of Mao in 1976 and subsequent political changes in China, he decided to leave. In considering his options, Sukrisno's long familiarity with the Netherlands appears to have been a deciding factor. His first visit had been in December 1949 when he had been invited by Prime Minister Mohammad Hatta to attend the Round Table Conference in the Hague as part of the media contingent covering the negotiations for the transfer of sovereignty.²⁴ In December 1980, together with his family he landed in the Netherlands, seeking political asylum. Active in a variety of exile periodicals and publications, in the 1980s he took the opportunity to study at the University of Amsterdam gaining a degree in anthropology. A staunch nationalist since his youth, Sukrisno had been active in the independence struggle in a variety of ways. Yet, during an interview in 1986, he reflected warmly upon his personal relations with Dutch colleagues in the pre-independence period.

When Indonesia was a colony, the Dutch treated me well. I served as the so-called native editor (*inheemse*) of the Aneta News Agency. The Editors-in-Chief were Dutch people. As an Indonesian editor, I had good relations with my Dutch colleagues: my salary was increased by the Director Mr De Vries. My salary was 110 guilders, a large sum at the time.²⁵

Echoing a perspective held by many educated Indonesians who then worked with the Dutch in similar situations, he added:

²³ On the organization of the PKI abroad after 1965, see Hill (2020: 348-365, 2014: 638-463).

²⁴ Details of Sukrisno's life were drawn from Santosa 2010a.

²⁵ The original interview appeared in *NRC Handelsblad*, 15 December 1986, but is cited here from the Indonesian translation given in Santosa 2010a. Translation into English by the author.

Nonetheless I felt uncomfortable seeing foreigners having so much power in Indonesia. But I could work with them, and they respected me too.²⁶

During all his years in exile Sukrisno remained adamantly “Indonesian” and never sought any other citizenship. As one of his daughters later recounted, “My father never wanted to take foreign citizenship, even after he had lived in the Netherlands for many years, when he was offered that country’s citizenship” (Teguh Santosa 2010b). He maintained that staunch nationalist position to his death in the Netherlands in 1999.

While only a handful of Indonesian ambassadors went into exile, journalists appear among the exile community in disproportionate numbers. One of the most prominent was Ibrahim Isa (Jakarta, 20 August, 1930 – Amsterdam, 16 March, 2016) (see Illustration 1), who had been the Indonesian representative at the Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) headquarters in Cairo, Egypt, from 1960 until 1965 (Zhou 2019a: 181).



Illustration 1. Ibrahim Isa, Amsterdam, 21 November 2008. (Photograph by David T. Hill).

As Zhou recounts, when the putsch took place in Jakarta “[on] October 1, 1965, Isa Ibrahim was on a flight from Cairo to Jakarta for the International Conference against Foreign Military Bases (Konferensi Internasional Anti-Pangkalan Militer Asing, KIAPMA) scheduled for mid-October 1965”. Only three months later as forces under Suharto were consolidating their control in Jakarta, in January 1966 Isa led an eight-person pro-Sukarno delegation (which

²⁶ For example, another well-known pioneering Indonesian journalist, Mochtar Lubis, expressed similar views about Dutch colleagues in the bank in which he worked prior to the Japanese occupation and Indonesian Independence (Hill 2010b: 22-23).

included Francisca Fanggaldaej who will be discussed later) to the Tricontinental Conference in Havana, Cuba. There they spoke out against Suharto's putsch convincing the conference participants to reject the attendance of a rival pro-Suharto delegation headed by Brigadier General Latief Hendraningrat, and to condemn the "suppression of democratic forces" by the Indonesian army.²⁷ After Jakarta responded by cancelling their passports, the delegation members were granted Cuban passports, which they used to travel to the PRC where Isa and Fanggaldaej spent the next two decades. Amongst other activities, Isa served on the staff of the CC-PKI Delegation, which was the primary (pro-Beijing) representation of the PKI abroad, until the effective disintegration of the delegation in the mid-1980s (Hill 2020: 351). Isa later recounted his "'unique' and 'remarkable'" personal story to a Dutch conference:

[In 1986], I and my family came to Holland [...] The land of our former adversary. For what? This time I came to make a request for asylum in the Netherlands. I and my family could not stay in my beloved country Indonesia, because of the oppressive regime of General Suharto. Is it not remarkable? How can events develop in such a turn? The Dutch government of 1986 followed a different policy towards Indonesia [to that during the struggle for Indonesian independence]. Netherlands and Indonesia had established normal diplomatic relations. However, abiding by the international and European conventions to protect political refugees from an oppressive regime, the Dutch government gave political asylum and protection to me and my family. How thankful I am to the Dutch government!

Arriving in Holland at the end of 1986, as a political refugee, I made [up] my mind to do my bit for mutual understanding and mutual respect, for co-operation and mutual benefit for the two nations and countries, Indonesia and the Netherlands. (Ibrahim Isa 2014).

Isa remained active as a writer and commentator on the Internet and appeared from time to time in Dutch events about Indonesia, when his facility with Dutch language was evident.²⁸ In addition, he was a perceptive observer of and commentator on the nuances of Dutch politics.²⁹

As flagged above, sharing similar traits with Isa was the journalist and political activist Francisca Fanggaldaej (Noel Mina, Timor, 16 August, 1925 - Utrecht, 13 November, 2013),³⁰ who was born into the family of

²⁷ Zhou (2019a: 181), which provides a full list of delegation members in footnote 73.

²⁸ For example, the participation of Ibrahim Isa and Francisca Fanggaldaej in the Writers Unlimited discussion of "Indonesia: the hidden history of 1965", 16 January 2004 (Aad van den Heuvel 2004).

²⁹ For example, "Sistem politik di Belanda dan kedaulatan rakyat; Pelajaran apa yang bisa kita tarik" (Isa [2000?]: 111-117).

³⁰ Fanggaldaej's memoir is published as Fransisca Fanggaldaej and Hersri Setiawan (2006). A short *BBC News Indonesia* documentary "G30S: Francisca Fanggaldaej, pejuang kemerdekaan yang dihapus dari sejarah" by Heyder Affan can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_3g4Ck-550; sighted 24-5-2022, with more detail in Heyder Affan (27-9-2021), "G30S: 'Saya selalu berdoa, kapan bertemu ibu', kisah Francisca Fanggaldaej dan tujuh anaknya 'terpisah' 38 tahun sejak 1965", *BBC News Indonesia*, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-58634801>; sighted 24-5-2022.

a high-ranking official in the Dutch civil service, speaking only Dutch in her childhood home in Timor. Despite such an upbringing she became a staunch nationalist, deeply involved in the struggle for independence (including as a broadcaster in both Dutch and English), playing a role in domestic youth organizations and passionately advocating for recognition of Indonesian independence on the world stage at various conferences.³¹ Indonesian feminist researcher and human rights activist Ita Fatia Nadia argues Fanggidaej's international advocacy on behalf of Indonesia at that time epitomized both "transnational activism" and internationalism (Affan 2021).

With experience as a leader of the leftist "Pemuda Rakyat" [People's Youth] organization from 1949 and as a career journalist, in 1957 she was appointed a member of the Indonesian People's Representative Council [Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR]. In that capacity she travelled widely abroad, attending the World Congress for Peace, National Independence and General Disarmament, Helsinki, in July 1965, and the International Organization of Journalists conference in Chile in October 1965, after which she remained overseas. When attending the Tricontinental Conference in Havana in January 1966, with Ibrahim Isa and other pro-Sukarno journalists, (as Zhou notes) "Fanggidaej used the conference stage to denounce the 'fascist acts' of persecution and torture used by the Indonesian military on the leaders of the Indonesian Women's Movement (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia)" and was therefore unable to return to Indonesia.³² As a consequence, she did not see her husband or seven children in Indonesia for another thirty-five years. After two decades in exile in Cuba and China, she eventually moved to the Netherlands in 1985, where she remained a staunch Indonesian nationalist and vocal political activist until her death.

Amongst senior figures in the Indonesian Communist Party Central Committee caught in exile was Ashar Sucipto ("Cipto") Munandar (Semarang, 2 May, 1924 - Rotterdam, 18 January, 2010), the pro-rector of the PKI's Marxist-Leninist training college, the Ali Archam Academy of Social Sciences (see Illustration 2). In that capacity he had been visiting East Germany at the invitation of the government when events in Jakarta in October 1965 prevented his return home. He joined other members of the PKI's Central Committee abroad forming the Delegation in Beijing in 1966. In 1985 he left China for the Netherlands where he gained citizenship and settled, passing away in 2010, the last survivor of the Delegation.

³¹ These included the 1947 World Youth and Students Festival in Prague, Czechoslovakia, the 1948 Conference of Youth and Students of Southeast Asia Fighting for Freedom and Independence, in Calcutta, India.

³² Zhou (2019a: 181). Quotation from Fanggidaej appears in "To the Women of Asia, Africa and Latin America", January 1966, Francisca Fanggidaej Papers in the International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam.



Illustration 2. A.S. Munandar, Rotterdam, 26 May 2009. (Photograph by David T. Hill).

In a reflection on his life, Munandar recounted how, having been born into an aristocratic Javanese family and schooled in Dutch from his infancy, “my primary language of social interaction was Dutch, and my mental world (*alam pikiran*) was essentially Dutch or Western more generally”.³³ Despite this early linguistic and intellectual familiarity with Dutch, his interactions with Dutch people were largely within the school environment. He grew up believing Indonesia would one day be independent of the colonial power, though not knowing how this might eventuate.

In late 1946, during the Republican struggle against the returning Dutch forces after the declaration of Indonesian Independence, Munandar accepted a Dutch “Malino” scholarship to study at the Delft Technical College (Technische Hogeschool Delft), working his passage from Jakarta to Rotterdam on the “Kota Inten” ship, together with about twenty other Indonesian scholarship students (Munandar 2009a: 264).³⁴ The various Indonesian students in the Netherlands at that time developed close bonds, reinforced by their nationalist ardour. Amongst those Munandar met was Tahsin, who was then studying in Amsterdam, but whom decades later he was to meet again in the Netherlands, this time in exile. Then active in the nationalist *Perhimpunan Indonesia* were staunch Indonesian nationalists who had both fought against German fascism

³³ Munandar (2009a: 258). Munandar recounted details of his life story in an interview in Rotterdam, 26 May 2009 (hereafter Munandar 2009b).

³⁴ On the significance of the Malino scholarship program in Indonesia-Netherlands relations, see Fakhri (2020: 92-94). For details of the Kota Inten, see <https://www.shipsnostalgia.com/media/kota-inten.477103/>, sighted 6-8-2022.

and whom Munandar regarded as “mentors”, most notably Slamet Faiman, who was later to assist many post-1965 exiles seeking refuge in the Netherlands (and to whom we shall return in due course).

Reflecting on his interactions with Dutch in the metropole during the immediate post-war period, Munandar noted the colonial mentality which prevailed, leading to frequent debates over Indonesia’s independence. But he also became involved in:

‘Perhimpunan Nederland-Indonesia’ (Netherlands-Indonesia Association) led by Professor [Wim] Wertheim who was absolutely in solidarity with the people and Republic of Indonesia. I began to get to know the CPN (Netherlands Communist Party), the only political party which did not hesitate to support Indonesian independence and the Republic of Indonesia (Munandar 2009a: 267).

Ultimately, after the Dutch broke a cease fire agreement with the Republic, along with about twenty other students Munandar protested by returning his Malino scholarship to end any financial dependence on the Dutch government. He later marked the beginning of his transformation into a political activist from that single act, after which, when he relocated to Prague to complete his studies with the support of the International Union of Students (IUS), he became a committed Marxist.

Towards the end of his life as he recounted sadly,

Although I have returned to my homeland on multiple occasions with a Dutch passport, as long as there is no justice for exiles, my travels to my homeland are, as described by a late comrade, “like a thief entering his own home” (Munandar 2009a: 273).

Ironically, it was in the Netherlands that Munandar was both initially radicalized and eventually found refuge after Suharto’s New Order stripped him of his citizenship forcing him into exile. For him, and numerous other exiles, such early associations with Wertheim and the CPN were crucial in the decision to choose the Netherlands as their preferred country of asylum. Munandar remained a passionate Indonesian nationalist but protected by and politically engaged in the politics of the former colonial state: epitomizing what might therefore be dubbed a post-colonial transnationalist.

Aligned not with the pro-Beijing but pro-Moscow faction of the PKI was Sulistiadewi Notoprayitno Sinuraya who left Jakarta to study medicine in Moscow in 1960. An activist in the People’s Youth and the CGMI (Consentrasi Gerakan Mahasiswa Indonesia, Concentration of the Indonesian Students’ Movement), she was unable to return to Indonesia after the rise of the New Order, marrying Thomas Sinuraya, head of the PKI’s Overseas Committee in Moscow in 1967. For more than twenty years in exile, while Thomas Sinuraya represented the pro-Moscow faction of the PKI in dealing with the highest levels of the Soviet Communist Party, the couple raised their family in the USSR. However, with Mikhail Gorbachev’s *perestroika* (the restructuring of the Soviet political and economic system) and the withering of international

solidarity in Eastern Europe, the couple decided to seek refuge in the Netherlands. A visit by President Suharto to Moscow in September 1989, which included signing a new declaration on “the Friendship and Cooperative Relations between the Republic of Indonesia and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics” underscored the changing political environment for the Indonesian exiles. A year and a half before the USSR was disestablished in December 1991, the family departed for the Netherlands.

For Sulistiadewi, one of the main factors in choosing the Netherlands over other possible countries of exile was the large number of Indonesians living there. It proved an easy transition, with the couple gaining residency within two months of their arrival. From her home in the Netherlands, she made five visits to Indonesia without impediment as no visa is required for Dutch citizens. In addition, she continues her links with her homeland by assisting with a magazine, *Druzhba*, published in Indonesia by alumni of Russian universities (Sinuraya 2012).

The Netherlands was also the destination of choice for Tatiana Lukman, eldest child of M.H. Lukman (1920-1965), first deputy chairman of the PKI (who was executed after a show trial in late 1965). Tatiana went to China to study in 1964 but relocated to Cuba after the Cultural Revolution interrupted her studies. In Havana University she studied French and Spanish, before gaining employment for nearly twelve years as a French teacher in the Tourism Institute. Despite fluency in Spanish and French, she left Cuba for the Netherlands in 1994 largely in the realization that comrades there had easier access to information particularly about developments in their homeland and were more easily able to travel than was the case for her in Cuba. As she recounted:

It was with the aim of obtaining the means to make it easier for me to take action that I decided to leave Cuba, a country which had accepted and protected me with great generosity and sincerity, had educated me and my child without having to pay a penny, had given me invaluable opportunities and experience building a society to which two generations of my family have aspired (Tatiana Lukman 2010: 168).³⁵

She left Cuba with great reservations, but it was the Netherlands which she felt offered her a closer connection to Indonesia. It was to prove a long and frustrating process. Three or four months after her initial application for residence to the Dutch Ministry of Justice she received a rejection and instruction to depart the country immediately. Her lawyer, Mr Tom Boekman, launched an appeal. Two years passed with no resolution, with a predicted third likely before an outcome. In her frustration, Tatiana wrote a letter

³⁵ Original: “Dengan tujuan mendapatkan alat yang memudahkan aku bergerak itulah aku ambil keputusan untuk meninggalkan Kuba, negeri yang telah menerima dan melindungiku dengan penuh kemurahan dan ketulusan hati, telah memberi pendidikan kepadaku dan anakku tanpa pembayaran sepeser pun, telah memberi kepadaku kesempatan dan pengalaman amat berharga dalam membangun sebuah masyarakat yang dicita-citakan oleh dua generasi keluargaku” (Lukman 2010: 168).

personally to Jan Pronk, then Minister for Development Cooperation and therefore familiar with the situation of leftists under Suharto's New Order. She outlined her political pedigree, the reasons for her application to reside in the Netherlands and its rejection, before explaining:

how the Dutch Colonial Government punished my two grandfathers who participated in the rebellion against Dutch colonialism in 1926 and banished them to Boven Digul [...] that during my grandfathers' time, the Dutch came to Indonesia without applying for a residence permit, but they ultimately stayed for 350 years (Lukman 2010: 171-172).³⁶

A month later, she received her residence permit. Despite not feeling "at home" in Holland (partly because of her unease speaking Dutch) Lukman has since built a career in the Netherlands as a sales consultant with a multinational firm in Amsterdam, from time to time appearing as an activist in local campaigns relating to Indonesia.³⁷ Like many other prominent exiles, she has published several books which have attracted attention and stimulated debate in Indonesia as she questions the dominant interpretation of post-1965 Indonesian history, with reference to her personal life and experience of exile.³⁸

Among the earliest exiles to make the move to the Netherlands was Sarmadji (born 20 April 1931), who had been studying in Beijing since 1964, but decided in the mid-1970s to move to Holland. The journey required several stages. Initially, he approached the Germany embassy in Beijing, since foreign students did not require a visa. To travel to Bonn in 1976, he used his long-expired Indonesian passport, which he had unofficially "extended" himself, with tickets paid for by the Chinese government. But Germany was never his ultimate destination. After a few days there, along with four companions, he took a car to the Dutch border from where they simply walked across into the Netherlands. Initially he relied on financial support and solidarity from those exiles who had arrived before him, just as he in turn assisted those still to come.

In the Netherlands he was helped by Raden Slamet Faiman (Karang Anjer, 3 September, 1909 – Amsterdam, 10 September, 1985), a former sailor, who had been in the *Perhimpunan Indonesia* there before Indonesian independence and was active in the anti-Nazi movement in the Netherlands during World War II.³⁹ Disabled during the resistance he remained in the Netherlands willingly assisting the exiles when they arrived. Faiman, together with Dutch academic Professor Wim Wertheim, helped Sarmadji find a lawyer who put his case for

³⁶ "bagaimana Pemerintah Kolonial Belanda menghukum kedua kakekku yang turut dalam pemberontakan melawan penjajahan Belanda pada tahun 1926 dan membuangnya ke Boven Digul [...] bahwa pada zaman kakekku, orang Belanda datang ke Indonesia tanpa mengajukan permintaan izin tinggal, tapi akhirnya mereka tinggal 350 tahun" (Lukman 2010: 171-172).

³⁷ On her feelings about living in the Netherlands, see Lukman (2010: 144-146). As an indication of her activism, see her appearance as a speaker on the Archive and Activism panel of the Peoplepower vs Shell campaign in 2018 at: <https://youtu.be/Fy5ZDQaRI8Y>.

³⁸ These include Lukman (2008, 2010, 2013, and 2016).

³⁹ On Faiman, see <https://4en5meiamsterdamzuidoost.nl/educatie/echte-helden/slamet-faiman>; sighted 18-3-2022.

residence to the Justice Department.⁴⁰ Because he was born in 1931 before the Round Table conference, Sarmadji was regarded as a citizen (*kawula*) of the Netherlands East Indies. His lawyer advised him to emphasize that he was a Sukarnoist, since this would strengthen his case for residence. Within a few months of applying, he was granted permission to remain in the Netherlands albeit without government financial support on the condition that he gain employment.

In his reflections upon this process, he noted the irony of having his expired passport accepted by the Dutch authorities after being invalidated by the Indonesian government. He soon got work in a glass factory in Amsterdam. Amongst the fifty-odd employees were three former soldiers who had served in the Dutch army in Solo in 1946. They helped interpreting Dutch for him until he became competent in the language. One of his supervisors was Surinamese, who to his surprise also spoke Javanese! Sarmadji worked there from 1976 to his retirement in 1996 at the age of sixty-five, after which he received a government pension. As he described it, his aim during these decades was 'to turn sadness into strength' [*"mengubah kesedihan menjadi kekuatan"*].

Initially the Dutch government issued him with a non-citizen's (or alien's) passport (*Vreemdelingenpaspoort*), which was valid for all countries except Indonesia. In 2000 he decided that he would apply for Dutch citizenship, which he received in March, so in May 2000 he could make his first visit to Indonesia since he had left for China in 1964.

Together with about fifteen other exiles, including several considerably younger, Sarmadji accumulated an extraordinary archive of materials on Indonesian politics and the exiles, which eventually became known as Perdoi (Perkumpulan Dokumentasi Indonesia, Indonesian Documentation Association). Housed in his small apartment, it filled virtually every space, and provided valuable, often otherwise unobtainable, materials for the use of any interested researcher, both internationals and Indonesian postgraduates studying in Europe. Of particular significance is a collection of obituaries, tributes, and biographical notes marking the passing of any exiles known to him right across the loose global network of Indonesian political exiles.

The Netherlands proved an attractive refuge for Indonesian exiles from around the world, irrespective of whether they had had previous experience living there. Sardjio Mintardjo (Purworejo, 6 June, 1936 - Oestgeest, 17 November, 2012) had left Indonesia in 1962 as a member of the 350-strong Indonesian delegation to a Youth Festival in Helsinki, funded by the Indonesian government (see Illustration 3). After the festival he travelled to Romania, where Indonesia's first ambassador in Bucharest, Sukrisno, asked him to stay and study. At that time, there were fewer than thirty Indonesian students in Romania, in what was a tight-knit community together with the diplomatic staff. All that changed after the events of 1965, by which time Sukrisno had been replaced as ambassador by Brigadier-General Sambas

⁴⁰ Sarmadji recounted details of his life story in an interview in Amsterdam, 8-11-2008 (hereafter Sarmadji 2008).

Atmadinata, who had previously served as Minister of Veterans' Affairs and Demobilization in Sukarno's Fourth Working Cabinet.

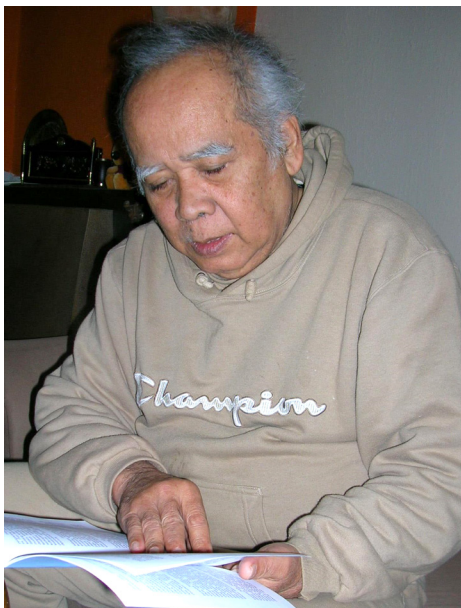


Illustration 3. Sardjio Mintardjo, Oestgeest, 17 November 2008. (Photograph by David T. Hill).

Rejecting an instruction to return to Indonesia at the threat of having his Indonesian passport cancelled by the embassy, Mintardjo opted to complete his studies and remain in Romania, where he found work in the hotel industry and married a Romanian woman, Liliana Gabrida Marinescu, with whom he had three children. After the overthrow and execution of long-time Romanian Communist Party (PCR) General Secretary Nicolae Ceaușescu in December 1989, Mintardjo accepted an invitation from an exile friend in the Netherlands to visit with a view to migrating. In 1990, using travel documents provided by the Romanian government attesting to his stateless status together with his annulled Indonesian passport, Mintardjo (and his wife) relocated to the Netherlands, where he gained citizenship in 1994.

It was with a sense of irony and a chuckle that in 2008 he showed me in his home in Oestgeest on the outskirts of Leiden, his original passport issued for his departure from Indonesia in 1962, marked in blue ink with the declaration "valid for all parts of the world except Taiwan, The Netherlands and Dutch Occupied Territories".⁴¹ While living in Bucharest, to facilitate his travels abroad he had "extended" the cancelled passport himself, as he did not wish to become a Romanian citizen or apply for a Romanian passport. Such reservations had waned by the time he settled in the Netherlands, when

⁴¹ Mintardjo kindly permitted me to view and photograph his passport during an interview in his home on 17-11-2008 (henceforth Mintardjo 2008).

he opted for Dutch citizenship partly to enable a visit to Indonesia in 1994 to see his ageing mother (Mintardjo 2008).

One of the most senior PKI exiles to live out their final years in the Netherlands was the artist Basoeki Resobowo (Palembang, 18 February, 1916 – Amsterdam, 5 January, 1999), who had been a member of the Delegation of CC-PKI in Beijing prior to relocating to Europe. Best known as a prolific painter who left a lasting imprint upon twentieth-century Indonesian visual arts, he was also a political activist and film industry worker. In 1955 Resobowo became a non-party member of the parliament [*konstituante*] supported by the PKI, and later held the position of head of the visual arts department of the left-leaning Institute for People's Culture (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat, Lekra).⁴² He was in China editing a film when the military came to power in Indonesia, so remained there, serving on the Delegation. As conflicts emerged within the exile community over the role and style of the party leadership, he was one of three members of the Delegation (along with Nung Cik and Abdulmadjid Djojoadingrat) to relinquish their positions in protest against Jusuf Adjitorop (Hill 2020: 357). For Resobowo the path to the Netherlands was not easy. On leaving China in 1972 he initially gained refuge in West Germany. However, it was to the Netherlands that he was pulled culturally and socially. As he explained:

My domicile is still in West Germany, because my political asylum and social benefits for living expenses are from that government. But I spend most of time in Holland. In Holland I am better able to take part in creative endeavours and political activities. And also because I've mastered Dutch as a daily language. I think if one is in a foreign country mastery of that language is the way to maintain one's presence there (Resobowo [1987?]: 1-2).⁴³

He maintained his home in Germany but used money from the sale of a painting to Vice-President Adam Malik to rent a one-room, four by five metre basement flat in Amsterdam which became his cluttered, productive studio.⁴⁴

In addition to continuing to paint prolifically and exhibit occasionally, he also self-published a diverse range of works, from autobiographical reflections (such as *Riwayat hidupku* and *Bercermin dimuka kaca; Seniman, seni dan masyarakat*), to illustrated stories (*Karmiatun: perempuan Indonesia; Sebuah roman* and *Cut Nyak Din*). His memoir recounts a brief meeting with his wife, who had remained in Indonesia when he departed for China in 1965. Blaming him for the enormous suffering she had endured over more than fifteen years of stigma because of his links with the PKI, she urged him not to return to Indonesia lest it undermine the safety and security she had struggled to

⁴² On Lekra, see Keith Foulcher 1986.

⁴³ "Domisiliku masih di Jerman Barat, sebab suwaka politik dan tunjangan social untuk biaya hidup dapat dari pemerintah negara tersebut Tapi aku lebih banyak berada di Holland. Di Holland aku lebih bisa berkiprah dalam usaha kreasi dan aktivitas politik. Dan juga Bahasa Belanda yang sudah dikuasai sebagai bahasa sehari-hari. Aku kira bila berada di negara asing adalah penguasaan bahasanya yang merupakan alat untuk mempertahankan kehadiran diri". (Resobowo [1987?]: 1-2).

⁴⁴ Resobowo ([1987?]: 1-5). On Resobowo's creativity in exile, see Hill 1993.

establish for herself and their daughter. It was only after nearly another two decades that he took advantage of the more open political environment in 1998 to make one return visit to Indonesia, before passing away in Amsterdam the following year. Significantly, in October-November 2021, after being virtually ignored in his homeland for more than half a century, a major exhibition of his life and work was curated at the national museum in Jakarta by Umi Lestari.⁴⁵

Artists and writers associated with Lekra are strongly represented amongst the exiles. Kuslan Budiman (Trenggalek, East Java, 6 April, 1935 – Naarden, Netherlands, 6 December, 2018), a Lekra office-bearer, had gone to China in January 1965 to study stage and set decoration, particularly innovations in Peking Opera (see Illustration 4).

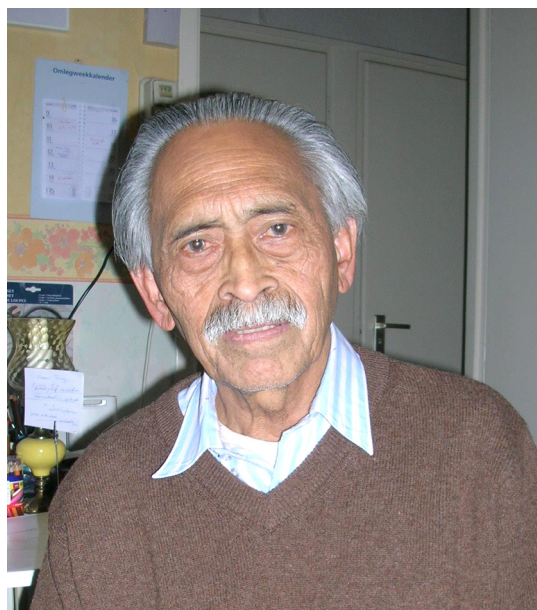


Illustration 4. Kuslan Budiman, Woerden, 18 November 2008. (Photograph by David T. Hill).

Frustratingly only a year after commencing, his studies were truncated by the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁶ In 1971, ill with hypertension and frustrated at the impediment to his studies, with the help of some sympathetic diplomats, he left for the USSR with several comrades, to pursue his studies. After completing his Masters thesis on batik, from 1981 he taught Indonesian language at the Asia-Africa Institute of Moscow State University. In 1991, taking the opportunity presented by *perestroika* and prompted by a rise in anti-Asian sentiment in the

⁴⁵ The electronic catalogue for this exhibition can be downloaded from <https://bit.ly/katalog-resobowo>, with a video introduction at: <https://bit.ly/videopameranresobowo>; sighted 29-5-2022.

⁴⁶ These biographical details are from Kuslan Budiman 2008, with additional material from R.H. Priyambodo 2018.

USSR, he sought to relocate to the Netherlands. A visiting Dutch journalist, Willem Oltmans, put him in touch with sympathetic friends in the Netherlands who provided him with an invitation to join them.⁴⁷ He arrived with no passport, merely a “travel document” provided by the Soviet government, initially lodging in a settlement centre housing many nationalities. Within a year, he gained his residence permit. His curiosity to see Indonesia after the fall of Suharto prompted him to become a Dutch citizen to obtain a passport to travel. This he was able to do with the assistance of a lawyer, and an application strengthened by having been born during the Dutch colonial period. He lived alone in Woerden until his death.

Also moving to the Netherlands from the USSR was M.D. Kartaprawira (born Solo, 6 June, 1938) who arrived at the end of December 1989, having lived, studied to doctoral level, and worked in Moscow since 1963.⁴⁸ He opted to move to the Netherlands because of the country’s long links with Indonesia, and substantial population of Indonesians including other exiles, plus a belief that communication with his homeland would be easier than from Moscow. His departure from the USSR was rather secretive. To get permission to travel abroad he told his employer he wanted to visit Holland but then simply did not return. Within a year he gained asylum, but finding employment was extremely difficult as he was in his fifties, had health problems, and spoke poor Dutch. Though he had learned the language at school, he had largely forgotten it during his decades in the USSR. Initially required to report regularly to the local employment office, this condition was eventually waived, and he remained on social security support. He was active in a variety of exile organizations in the Netherlands, including LPK65 (Lembaga Perjuangan Korban 1965, Institute for 1965 Victims’ Struggle), on which he served as General Chairperson (*Ketua Umum*). He opted for Dutch citizenship and returned to Indonesia in 2000 for the first time since his departure in 1963. A staunch Sukarnoist all his life, he maintained an active engagement in Indonesian politics, including representing the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan, PDIP), headed by Sukarno’s daughter Megawati, in the Netherlands for a period after 2002. In 2005 he gave a speech as an international delegate at the PDIP Congress in Bali, which highlights the extent to which some in the exile community remain not simply interested but active participants in, the politics of their homeland.

This mere handful of exiles cannot be regarded as fully representative of the hundreds who have sought asylum in the Netherlands after 1965. But those presented here might indicate something of their diversity. What could it be that draws them all to the Netherlands?

⁴⁷ For a brief overview of Oltmans’ life, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willem_Oltmans.

⁴⁸ Information on Kartaprawira’s life provided during an interview at his home in Den Haag on 23-5-2009 (hereafter Kartaprawira 2009).

5 WHY THE NETHERLANDS?

Dragojlovic has concluded that “of all the Western nation-states where exiles went to live permanently, the Netherlands was the only one that kept providing sufficient institutional and monetary support for the legacy of the Indonesian left” (Dragojlovic 2016: 69). The Netherlands represented a point of convergence for Indonesians from diverse political groups and affiliations, most obviously, for those exiles who had previously been associated with both the pro-China and pro-USSR factions of PKI, plus others opposed to the New Order. Many came from years in exile, often in small groups, in states as diverse as Albania, Romania, Burma, East Germany, and North Vietnam. In the Netherlands, such previous divides could be bridged, as the exiles found more in common than might pit them against each other.

As the preceding individual accounts indicate, the Indonesian exiles who came to reside in the Netherlands were motivated by a range of factors. One of the most significant was what might be called the “cultural pull” of the former colonial state and its substantial Indonesian population. In other terms, this might be described as a familiarity with the language, culture, and history of the Dutch. As Tatiana Lukman has alluded, there was even a belief that the Netherlands had a moral debt to Indonesians. Many, such as Sungkono, who commenced studying engineering in Moscow in August 1962, then spent time in China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand prior to settling in the Netherlands in 1981, felt the Dutch were generally sympathetic to the Indonesians who migrated then. Sungkono understood that the then Dutch immigration department head had once been a police commander in Indonesia and “according to him this historical connection made it easier for them to follow the integration process”.⁴⁹

A pivotal factor for many exiles, particularly those still politically active, was the presence of sympathetic Dutch support networks, which included well-disposed immigration lawyers like Tom Boekman and political activists, such as academic Wim Wertheim, journalist Joop Morriën (see Illustration 5), and other members of the Dutch Communist Party.⁵⁰

Arriving exiles benefitted greatly from the raft of social, cultural, financial, and legal assistance such networks could offer (Sipayung 2011: 18). After the initial post-1965 exiles settled successfully in the Netherlands there is clear evidence of “chain migration”, in which an individual’s choice of ultimate destination is influenced heavily by knowing of other Indonesian exiles already living there who might provide them some initial support. For some exiles who had lost contact with their families in Indonesia because of concerns any communication from socialist countries would jeopardize the recipients in the eyes of the New Order state, there was a hope that residing in the Netherlands would make it easier for them to trace and reconnect with their lost families through friendship networks.

⁴⁹ Quotation from Saptari (2019: 127) who cites Sungkono (2017: 10).

⁵⁰ On Morriën’s long association with Indonesia, the PKI and the exile community, see Joop Morriën 1995.



Illustration 5. Joop Morriën, Amsterdam, 11 November 2008. (Photograph by David T. Hill).

That said, many Indonesian political exiles opted to reside in other countries because of choice or circumstance, with substantial numbers settling in France and Sweden largely on account of their sympathetic refugee policies. Others who had initially gained residence elsewhere in Europe (such as Basuki Resobowo who settled initially in Germany) eventually gravitated to Netherlands by choice feeling it was more familiar with a larger Indonesian community.

Beyond the Netherlands, Indonesian exiles have settled across a dozen or more countries yet still share transnational bonds which sustain them. It is a measure of the exiles' transnationalism that they function broadly as an international network, with personal relationships of mutual support crossing national boundaries in a myriad of ways. When the wife of Paris-based exile Umar Said was coming from Indonesia to re-unite with him after thirteen years of separation, they rendezvoused in the Netherlands. Tahsin and his family came to the airport to welcome her to their home to stay *en route* to Paris. In the early 1980s, for example, when a cooperative of exiles in Paris was establishing the first Indonesian restaurant there as a source of self-employment and support, they reached out to comrades in the Netherlands in their efforts to secure a suitable chef for their venture as Indonesian cuisine had a long-standing popularity in the Netherlands, with dozens of such restaurants from which to source potential staff. Such support was both highly individual and personal, but also communal and political. Exiles gather across state boundaries for funerals or other significant political or cultural events. Those from Sweden, for example, travelled to the Netherlands to meet the Indonesian Minister for Human Rights when he came in 2000 on the instructions of President Abdurrahman Wahid to

consult the so-called “*klayaban*” (wanderers), as the president had dubbed the exiles, who gathered there from across Europe.

6 CHANGING ENGAGEMENT WITH THEIR HOMELAND

While the drift of exiles from across the globe to the Netherlands (and other countries in Western Europe) was largely stimulated by their desire to feel more “in touch” with their homeland, through an enhanced ability to socialize with other Indonesians who had congregated in the Netherlands, to some extent the timing of this movement within the exile community was aligned with changes in global information and communications technologies. Similarly, greater accessibility to more affordable international air travel enhanced mobility and interaction between the exiles, their families, and a constantly changing flow of Indonesian students coming to the Netherlands. As Anderson has noted, even in 1992, quite early in the development of social media, for migrants living outside their home nation “The mediated imagery of “home” is always with them” (1992: 8). The exiles in the Netherlands shared this sense, accelerating from the 1980s onwards, of a greater emotional proximity with Indonesia. In general, the exiles had never used personal computers prior to arriving in the Netherlands but embraced the technology rapidly when it became available (Daraini 2017: 66). Greater access to new technologies such as satellite pay-TV, (uncensored) email communication, Internet, VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) cheap and easy voice/phone connections, social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and the like, all combined to enable closer linkages with Indonesians “back home”. There was a boom in exiles using online platforms to communicate both among themselves across national borders and with interested parties in Indonesia. They gleefully embraced these possibilities to communicate with new audiences in Indonesia after decades excluded from domestic engagement. Daraini notes that, not only did their Internet activities enable a “more dynamic [...] projection of [their] ideals and values”, “the new information they received from the Internet constantly reshape[d] these ideals and eventually the notion of Indonesia as the imagined homeland”.⁵¹

During several interviews I had with exiles in their homes, their televisions constantly broadcast instantaneous Indonesian programming via satellite, literally bringing their homeland into their living (rooms), erasing any gap in time between events in Indonesia, the viewing experience of Indonesians in their homeland, and the experience of the exiles. The opening up of online meeting platforms such as Zoom added to the facility for exiles to participate directly in seminars/webinars and live “real-time” discussions with other participants in Indonesia (and elsewhere around the globe). Similarly, I recall chatting with an Indonesian journalism lecturer and publisher in Yogyakarta whose aunt (whom I also knew) was an exile in Amsterdam, when he took out his mobile phone and rang her up to share with her the conversation we were having in Java. Such possibilities were unimaginable for the exiles for at least

⁵¹ Daraini 2017. Quotation from the Abstract.

the first two decades of their long isolation when virtually any communication with their families in Indonesia was either impossible or fraught with danger and apprehension. The twenty-first century has rapidly shrunk the distance between exile and homeland.

Dragojlovic notes that many exiles became involved in international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in human rights (2010: 64). In the early years of exile the Dutch solidarity organization, *Komite Indonesia*, set up by Prof. W.F. Wertheim (among others) in 1968, attracted exiles keen to assist in the publishing of its newsletter *Indonesie Feiten en Meningen* (Facts and Opinions about Indonesia) which was committed to exposing human rights violations, including the circumstances in which political prisoners were being held by the New Order, and pushing for political reform in Indonesia. After Wertheim's death in 1998, the organization was formally closed in 2000, though the Wertheim Foundation continued its spirit of engagement in human rights, involving exiles.⁵² Ibrahim Isa, for example, served as secretary of the Wertheim Foundation, which presented a human rights and free speech award to Indonesians (Dragojlovic 2010: 65). Isa was one of a number of Indonesians also active in the Dutch branch of Amnesty International, periodically lobbying both the Dutch branch and the London head office to retain focus on human rights issues in Indonesia.⁵³

Similarly, the Institute for 1965 Victims' Struggle (Lembaga Perjuangan Korban 1965, LPK65) proved an important rallying point around which Netherlands-based exiles mobilized to defend the human rights of former political prisoners in Indonesia and those of exiles stripped of citizenship abroad (Sipayung 2011: 27).⁵⁴ In addition to an occasional blog to circulate related human rights articles and information the organization held or co-convened public events on the theme of the 1965 tragedy.⁵⁵ As its name indicates, the organization was explicitly focused on raising public awareness about the ongoing suffering of victims of the 1965 tragedy and lobbying the Indonesian government to offer recompense and reconciliation.

It was less common for Indonesian exiles to involve themselves directly in Dutch political affairs, but some, such as Suparna Sastra Diredja, did. In his case, Suparna became close to members of the Dutch Communist Party, notably journalist Joop Morriën. As Morriën observed,

⁵² Isa's obituary of Wertheim is published in: Isa ([2000?]: 35-36).

⁵³ As noted, for example, in: his blog <http://ibrahimisa.blogspot.com/2011/05/>; sighted 8-8-2022.

⁵⁴ It appears the organization is also occasionally referred to as Lembaga Pembela Korban 1965, see for example, <https://www.blogger.com/profile/01243819969148035100>; sighted 8-8-2022.

⁵⁵ For example, the blog publishes the speech by LPK65 chairperson M.D. Kartaprawira at an event in Diemen on 2 October 2010 commemorating the 45th anniversary of the 1965 tragedy. See <http://lembaga-pembela-korban-1965.blogspot.com/2010/12/tuntaskan-kasus-pelanggaran-ham-berat.html>; sighted 8-8-2022.

Most exiles, certainly in the early 1980s, were hesitant in public either because they did not yet have a residence permit or because they wanted to take family members in Indonesia into consideration. Parna was also cautious but did not hesitate to participate in and speak in public demonstrations if necessary.⁵⁶

In addition to such explicitly political activities, the exiles either initiated or became closely involved with other social organizations bringing together Indonesians in the Netherlands. One of the most significant and enduring has been *Perhimpunan Persaudaraan* (PP, Fraternity Association), established in 1987 to unite exiles across all factions and backgrounds together with other members of the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands (Yoland Eka Safitri 2021).⁵⁷ Dragojlovic describes it as “one of the most inclusive organisations of Indonesians in the Netherlands”, including all PKI factions and more recent migrants, with this latter group more involved after the fall of the New Order lessened the previous barriers between the 1965 leftists and other Indonesian nationals abroad (2010: 65). Activities include the celebration of key events in the Indonesian calendar, with discussions and cultural performances. *Persaudaraan*, along with like-minded organizations, has also lobbied the Dutch government in support of exiles whose applications for asylum have been rejected.⁵⁸

An important role is played within the exile community by those who document their experience as part of the history of the Indonesian Left (Dragojlovic 2016: 64). First among these documentation collections are those established by Hersri Setiawan in the International Institute of Social History (IISG) in Amsterdam under the title “In Search of Silenced Voices: Indonesian Exiles of the Left”⁵⁹ and the more informal collective (mentioned above) *Perkumpulan Dokumentasi Indonesia* (Perdoi), housed in Sarmadji’s Amsterdam apartment. Both fulfil a crucial role in embedding exile stories as records of Indonesia’s history for both researchers and the exile community itself. In particular, by documenting the deaths of Indonesian political exiles around the globe, Perdoi “creates a leftist diaspora” since “obituaries that reflect on an individual life and its end are the documents par excellence to mark the absence” (Dragojlovic 2010: 67).

⁵⁶ On his relationship with Morriën and the Dutch Communist Party, see Morriën (1995: 207-208). Suparna (self-) published a number of historical novels during his exile including *Sastra Diredja* 1987 and 1992.

⁵⁷ To provide some context, in 2010 there were approximately 382,000 Indonesian nationals resident in the Netherlands, out of a total population of some 16.6 million (source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1284963/indonesian-nationals-population-netherlands/#:~:text=Number%20of%20Indonesian%20nationals%20resident%20in%20the%20Netherlands%202010%2D2021&text=In%202021%2C%20there%20were%20352.3,3.7%20thousand%20compared%20to%202020>. And <https://countryeconomy.com/demography/population/netherlands?year=2010>; sighted 8-6-2022).

⁵⁸ For example, I have a copy of a letter dated 2 September 1991 sent on behalf of the organizations Aksi Setiakawan, Yayasan Perhimpunan Indonesia and Persaudaraan to a member of the Dutch House of Representatives (*Tweede Kamer*) on behalf of an exile family whose application for asylum had been rejected. The exile had been a student in the USSR, then spent nineteen years in East Germany before seeking asylum in the Netherlands.

⁵⁹ For details, see <http://www.iisg.nl/collections/silencedvoices/index.php>; sighted 19-3-2022.

In this process, another exile association, the Indonesian Culture and History Foundation (Yayasan Sejarah dan Budaya Indonesia, YSBI), has also played a key role. Established in 1999, it aimed to document the lives (and passing) of exiles, publish their writings in both book and periodical form (including through a magazine called *Kreasi*).⁶⁰ Initially chaired by Hersri Setiawan, among its key achievements was the collaborative production with publisher Yayasan Lontar in Jakarta of a substantial volume of exile poetry⁶¹ but beyond such physical products the organization also provided a forum for discussion and encouragement of exile literary production and historical analysis. Perhaps not surprisingly given so many of the exiles were highly educated, with a large proportion of cultural activists and journalists, as a community from the early years of their exile to the present, they are prolific, writing and publishing a wide variety of materials, both via collective organizations such as the YSBI, and other entities.⁶² Most commonly their focus was on publishing the works of exiles but, as we have noted above, in some instances, such as when Tahsin set up Manus Amici, they have published the works of Indonesian authors persecuted in their homeland.

The most active organization for Indonesian women, particularly but not exclusively exiles, is the DIAN Foundation (Stichting DIAN), whose website is in Dutch (an indication of the gradual incorporation of the Indonesian exiles into the Dutch community), but whose newsletter, *Sinar DIAN*, is in Indonesian suggesting the most common language of the participants and target group. As the website states: "On August 14, 2013, the DIAN Foundation was established as a continuation of the Indonesian women's network DIAN. This women's group was created in 1987 as a social safety net for a group of Indonesian women in the Netherlands with the aim of promoting a sense of community among women".⁶³ Since its establishment DIAN has sponsored a broad range of events and activities, from leadership training programmes for women, seminars on employment for migrant woman and sexual harassment, to commemorations of the life of Indonesian women's activist Kartini. Despite the advanced years of many of the founding members of the group, DIAN remains active, continuing to publish its newsletters which are full of information of assistance to Indonesian women in the Netherlands, also documenting the passing of DIAN members and sympathizers including exiles.⁶⁴

Outside of any formal organization individual exiles found an influential place within the Indonesian diaspora as educators and influencers of younger generations. Pak Mintardjo, for example, offered his home as a welcome location for young Indonesian students coming to the Netherlands, who

⁶⁰ On the establishment of YSBI, see <https://www.mail-archive.com/siarlist@minipostgresql.org/msg01355.html>, dated 8 June 1999; sighted 6-6-2022.

⁶¹ Asahan Alham et al. 2002.

⁶² Chambert-Loir (2016a) provides an extensive list of such publications by exiles.

⁶³ Google Translation at: https://stichtingdian-org.translate.google.com/wat-is-dian/?_x_tr_sl=nl&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en-US&_x_tr_pto=wapp; sighted 16-3-2022.

⁶⁴ For example, see *Sinar DIAN*, *Edisi* 16, April 2021, at: https://stichtingdian.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/SinarDian_Edisi016_FINAL.pdf; sighted 6-6-2022.

would gather for conversation and discussions across a wide range of topics including the experiences of the exiles and the direction of contemporary Indonesian politics. Such exiles “bridged” the past and the present for younger Indonesians for whom the New Order education system had largely expunged any trace of non-government interpretations of the past.

7 CHANGING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INDONESIAN STATE

The primary determinant of the relationship between the exiles and their homeland over the period of exile has been the attitude of the prevailing government in Indonesia, reflected in the stance of the Indonesian embassy. Once *personae non grata* during the New Order, embassy attitudes towards the exiles have since shifted.

The most sympathetic president was Abdurrahman Wahid who, in January 2000, instructed the Minister for Law and Legislation to go to the Netherlands to meet “Indonesians abroad who have been prevented from returning to their homeland since the occurrence of the 30th of September/PKI event in 1965” (Abdurrahman Wahid 2000). In this it was notable that the specific instruction was to go to the Netherlands rather than any other country or any mix of countries. Exiles from across Europe were invited to the meeting with the Minister, with high hopes, soon dashed when no positive outcomes emerged.

Under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono a brief opportunity emerged under a 2006 citizenship law to allow individuals to regain citizenship if they applied within three years (prior to 1 August 2009). This provision applied to various categories of former citizens, including those who had lost citizenship for failure to register at the relevant embassy abroad, together with individuals who had been members of organizations (such as the Free Aceh Movement [GAM] or the Free Papua Organisation [OPM]) which had taken up arms against the Indonesian state. There was no specific provision for those such as the *mahid* who had had their citizenship withdrawn while they were studying abroad on government scholarships, who nonetheless retained a belief in the unity of the Indonesian nation, and who had never rebelled against a legitimate government in Indonesia (Sipayung 2011: 16). When the Minister of Law and Human Rights came to the Netherlands in September 2008 to promote these newly offered options for regaining citizenship, no representatives of either the LPK65 or *Perhimpunan Persaudaraan* exile organizations were explicitly invited, although this was rectified at a meeting the following year with a Ministry Director General which YPK65 delegates attended (Saptari 2019: 129). Such exiles regarded the absence of a government apology and a requirement to declare their loyalty to the Indonesian state affronts. However, some did take up the option of regaining citizenship.⁶⁵

More broadly, the 1965 political exiles have benefitted from a growing recognition by the Indonesian government of the advantages of fostering closer relations with Indonesians abroad, leading to the conceptualization

⁶⁵ M.D. Kartaprawira, from the Human Rights organization LPK65, outlined the position of exiles on regaining citizenship in a posting dated 14 February 2020, posted on his Facebook account.

of an “Indonesian diaspora”. Initially conceived in the form of a Congress of Indonesian Diaspora (CID) convened by Indonesian Ambassador to the US (2010-2013), Dino Patti Djalal in 2012, it took organizational form as the Indonesian Diaspora Network (IDN) which has since held major congresses periodically.⁶⁶ While the political exiles were largely peripheral to the IDN (which seemed more directed towards emigrants and entrepreneurs or students temporarily abroad), a network goal for Indonesia to legalize dual citizenship might have appealed to exiles who wished to return to Indonesia while retaining their Dutch social security benefits. While dual citizenship has yet to be adopted by the Indonesian parliament (DPR) despite IDN lobbying, in 2016 immigration regulations were relaxed to enable “former Indonesian citizens, and their spouses and children” to “obtain a multiple-entry visit visa for five years, making an exception to the general rule that it is only valid for 60 days and cannot be extended” (Dewansyah 2021: 294). By the time of this relaxation, however, most surviving exiles were of such an advanced age that the prospect of uprooting and returning to a society they had left more than half a century earlier was too daunting to undertake.⁶⁷ The declining health of the ageing first generation of exiles, the deepening integration into Dutch society of following generations and associated distancing from the homeland of their forebears is likely to weaken the capacity of the exiles, both individually and organizationally, to assert their claims for justice and acknowledgement of Indonesian citizenship.

8 CONCLUSION: PARADOX OF POSTCOLONIAL NATIONALISTS’ TRANSNATIONALISM

The peculiarities of their individual journeys from initial site of exile where they were located in September 1965 through various the transit states in which they lived temporarily, to their point of ultimate settlement in the Netherlands, mean that Indonesian political exiles there “felt belonging to or emotionally involved with” not merely their homeland and the Netherlands (Sipayung 2011: 28). They might identify, to greater or lesser degrees, with a number of societies through which they have passed and which have supported them in their search for ultimate asylum. Their sense of identification with “home” is not simply with their state of origin (Indonesia) and ultimate host state (the Netherlands), but a much more fluid transnational experience of movement through states to ultimate host. Many speak not only Indonesian and Dutch but also the languages of their previous hosts including Albanian, Burmese, Chinese, French, German, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The exiles too spring from a post-colonial generation of Indonesian political activists inspired by Sukarno (amongst others) to engage intellectually with the world and to see themselves simultaneously as Indonesian nationalists

⁶⁶ On the development of the concept of diaspora in Indonesia, see Bilal Dewansyah 2021.

⁶⁷ Although the numbers were very small, some exiles did return to live in Indonesia after the fall of Suharto, including Sidik Kertapati from the Netherlands in 2002 (passing away five years later), and Awal Uzbara from Russia in 2012 (also dying after five years). On Kertapati, see Munandar (2009a: 196-200) and on Uzbara, see Syarif Maulana 2021.

and global citizens. As the previous select biographies have indicated, many were active in a variety of international or Third World organizations and networks, attending international conferences or staffing overseas bureaux. Their sense of their place in the world was therefore broad and encompassing. Therefore, after exile their transnationalism is not binary (original home to final host) but cumulative along a continuum of refugee experience. Their social and emotional connections extend even beyond those countries in which they have lived to a broad network of fellow exiles now resident elsewhere, whether that be those remaining in China, the Russian Federation and other states of original settlement (such as the Czech Republic), or in states of final asylum such as France, Sweden, or Germany. It is common for exiles from across such locations to gather for key events such as the funeral of a particularly prominent figure (although as the exiles age this becomes increasingly difficult).

While Indonesia remains their primary and primarily their most evocatively emotional “home”, there is a recognition that their memories of the Indonesia they left prior to 1965 no longer reflect today’s Indonesia; that their offspring identify more with the Netherlands than with an Indonesia in which they have generally never lived with a language they might well not speak with ease; that returning to Indonesia (even if this were legally possible) would require them to relinquish much of the social and economic safety net which the Netherlands provides its citizens. Remaining bans in Indonesia on “Communism-Marxism-Leninism” imposed under the July 1966 Provisional People’s Consultative Assembly decree [TAP no. XXV/MPRS/1966] continue to present a major impediment to the return of leftist exiles. As Cipto Munandar told sympathetic Dutch journalist Joop Morriën in a November 2000 interview, “the laws as they were under Suharto have not fundamentally changed. And as long as that does not happen, it will remain difficult to make a decision whether or not to return permanently”.⁶⁸ In this, little has altered in the intervening two decades.

The post-1965 Indonesian exiles share many such quandaries with other migrants who leave their country of origin to establish a new life elsewhere. The contradiction, however, for the Indonesian political exiles is compounded by the fact that the formative years of their lives were spent committed to a nationalist ideology antithetical to the Dutch colonial presence in Indonesia. Whether they were members of the PKI, the PNI, or Sukarno loyalists opposed to Suharto’s New Order, they had strived and struggled to establish a post-colonial national state independent of Dutch influence and control. Their decision to leave Indonesia to study or represent their country abroad was taken on the assumption that, firstly their absence would be temporary, and secondly, their knowledge and experience would serve the best interests of their country on their return home.

⁶⁸ Morriën (2000) in: Munandar 2009a. Quotation from page 280.

Studies of Indonesian political exiles frequently apply Benedict Anderson's concept of "long distance nationalism" (1992).⁶⁹ But Anderson himself was dismissive of the politics of such nationalism as "politics without responsibility or accountability" (1992: 11). The Indonesian exiles differ significantly from those Anderson highlights as living abroad to escape the consequences of their anti-governmental political actions (in his example, a Sikh living in Toronto who funds terrorist campaigns against non-Sikhs in the Punjab). The Indonesian exiles have paid a huge personal price for their political allegiances and opposition to the New Order state: they have been obliged to relinquish their rights as Indonesian citizens, their opportunities to return permanently to their homeland and (at least until the fall of Suharto in 1998) to maintain free communication with their families and loved ones in Indonesia. They were indeed a "long distance" from their nation, but their loyalties were transnational, bridging between nations and open to incorporating allegiances and affinities with transit states along the way, in a manner which might be regarded as more truly "international" or global, rather than merely "national" or "bi-national". Yet, at their core, they remain fiercely proud of their Indonesian identity. As Ibrahim Isa told *Tempo* at the 17 August Indonesian independence ceremony in Amsterdam in 2015, "my exile comrades and I could well have a higher national consciousness than those sitting in parliament now" (Yuke Mayaratih 2015).⁷⁰ Despite decades of involuntary separation from their homeland, as Saptari's extensive study of Indonesian exiles associated with the International People's Tribunal concluded, the exiles retained "their tenacious sense of belonging and affinity with the Indonesian nation" (2019: 116), despite their refuge for decades in the land of their former colonizer.

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⁶⁹ Long-distance nationalism has been defined as "a set of identity claims and practices that connect people living in various geographical locations to a specific territory that they see as their ancestral home" (Nina Glick Schiller 2005).

⁷⁰ "Mungkin kesadaran berbangsa saya dan kawan-kawan eksil lebih tinggi dari mereka yang duduk di parlemen sekarang".

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