

International Institute of Social History Amsterdam

The Social Evolution of Indonesia

The Asiatic Mode of Production and its Legacy

Fritjof Tichelmar



Martinus Nijhoff

THE SOCIAL EVOLUTION OF INDONESIA
The Asiatic Mode of Production and Its Legacy

by

FRITJOF TICHELMAN

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JEAN SANDERS



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Front cover, *left*: Pakoe Boewono IX, ca. 1865 (1); *right*: Governor-General Johannes Count van den Bosch (2).

Back cover, *left*: President Soekarno (3); *right*: President Soeharto (4).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work has been inspired by another, larger project: the collecting and editing of source materials for the history of the Social-Democratic Association of the Indies (ISDV) and the early communist movement which was born out of the former. The Indonesian part of the Sneevliet collection (1914-1918) at the International Institute of Social History constituted the starting point. Several years of archival research in the Colonial State papers of the Ministry of the Interior resulted in a whole series of documents covering the history of both movements in question (from c. 1916).

The first volume, encompassing source-materials on the earliest socialist stirrings and the first years of the ISDV from its founding in May 1914 up to the split between the moderate Dutch social-democrats and the radical Dutch and Indonesian marxists in September 1917, will be published in the course of 1980. Succeeding volumes will cover the later Sneevliet period (Oct. 1917-Dec. 1918) and the last years of the ISDV (1919-1920) up to the establishment of the Communist Party.

The original introduction to the first volume mentioned above included a chapter on the political life of Henk Sneevliet, that spectacular character who wrought the transformation of the ISDV from a small Dutch club into a militant Indonesian political organization, who was one of the founding fathers of the Chinese Communist Party and made a career or rather several careers in the Dutch (social-democratic, communist, and left socialist) labour movement. Another chapter provided a sketch of Indonesian society and its vital problems with which the ISDV and the Communist Party (PKI) were confronted. Both subjects have grown into separate books. *Henk Sneevliet: Een politieke biografie* (a political biography) was published in 1974 (German edition 1978). In 1975 a doctoral thesis was accepted at the University of Amsterdam under the title: *Stagnatie en beweging: Sociaal-historische beschouwingen over Java en*

Indonesië in Aziatisch verband (Stagnation and Movement: Socio-historical Observations on Java and Indonesia in an Asiatic setting).

The thesis aimed at answering a number of questions arising from the specific evolution of social-democracy and communism in Indonesia: early date of socialist penetration; dominant role of Europeans in the pioneering years; early rise of an Indonesian mass movement; marginal role played by the Indonesian intelligentsia in the labour movement; international isolation; and finally a promising rise of the communist movement terminating in revolt and easy liquidation from above.

The first draft attempted to construct a comparative framework encompassing the main types of colonial (and post-colonial) societies in the Third World, in connection with different origins of communist movements in the most important countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia. This approach soon proved to be over-ambitious. The comparative context had to be reduced to the direct Asian surroundings of Indonesia: Southeast Asia, and the great cultural mother countries which have so profoundly influenced Southeast Asian history: China and India.

The concept of the 'Asiatic Mode of Production' provided useful criteria for the analysis of similarities and differences in the areas covered. Starting from a comparative approach of pre-capitalist Asian societies their evolution was traced in broad outline up to the present. Within this framework a number of specific traits of Javanese (and to a lesser extent Indonesian) socio-history could be traced; the main focus hereby being on the relationship between stagnation tendencies inherited from pre-capitalist times and reinforced by Dutch colonial intervention, and on the other hand the forces of change, movement and revolution from without and within.

The documentary base of this work is anchored in archival research only for the period 1913-1918/19, that is the Sneeveliet period of socialism in Indonesia. So most of this book is founded on secondary materials, that is bibliographical research in Dutch libraries (IISG, KITLV, Univ. of Amsterdam). For reasons of homogeneity references to archival sources were left out. The forthcoming volumes on the ISDV and the early PKI will provide the material evidence for the years 1914-1927 in so far as the history of the political labour movement is concerned.

This book does not pretend to be a substantial social history either of Java or of Indonesia. It is simply an attempt to survey the broad

outlines in order to stimulate further research and discussion in that direction.

The original text of the thesis (1975) has been revised and enlarged on the basis of recent literature up to 1977/78.

In the notes abbreviated titles have been used; full titles are to be found in the alphabetical bibliography. As to orthography of Asian terms and names we did not aim at linguistic precision. For Indonesian terms the current — ejaan baru — spelling was used; for Chinese names we stuck to Wade Giles because of the many problems still attached to the new orthography.

The contributions of colleagues, friends, teachers and of my wife, who have aided me in some way or other during a dozen years of research is too great and many-sided to be specified in detail. One exception may be allowed: professor Wertheim without whose intervention and support this work would not have been written.

Table 3 appearing on page 164 has been reprinted with the kind permission of MIT Press.

GLOSSARY

<i>abangan</i>	Javanese with a syncretist religio-cultural outlook; often formally still Muslim but not always so. In this work the term is used in the Geertzian sense, that is the non-aristocratic variant: the Javanist common people.
<i>adat</i>	traditional law and custom.
<i>aliran</i>	major socio-cultural group or tendency (i.e. santri, priyayi, abangan), particularly as when embodied in respective political parties.
<i>Cukong</i>	large-scale entrepreneur of Chinese descent; closely co-operating with, and protected by, highly-placed Indonesian officials.
<i>Darul Islam</i>	'House of Islam'; traditionally orthodox Muslim movement aiming at the establishment of an Islamic State by force.
<i>gogol</i>	villagers holding communal or freehold rights to farmland.
<i>haji</i>	pious Muslim who has undertaken the pilgrimage to the holy places of Mecca etc., and thereby has earned religious and social prestige; often also a prosperous (Muslim) landlord and/or businessman.
<i>Kedjawèn</i>	Java proper, or Inner Java; the area in Central and East Java running from Banjumas up to Malang, the centre being the Jogjakarta Surakarta region.
<i>kiyayi</i>	traditionalist-Muslim religious teacher.
<i>lurah</i>	village chief; elected head of a desa.
<i>madrasah</i>	Muslim school for religious and general education (generally more advanced than the <i>pesantren</i>).
<i>pamong praja</i>	civil service / higher civil servant administrators appointed by the central government.
<i>pangreh praja</i>	Javanese civil service in colonial times / higher Javanese civil servants.
<i>Pasisir</i>	'beach', coastal area, particularly the northern zone of Java. In this work also used for the whole zone of commercial – maritime centres and their direct hinterlands from Aceh up to Maluku.
<i>pemuda</i>	youth; particularly mobile and radicalized youths who participated in the nationalist struggle for independence.
<i>penghulu</i>	head of the mosque staff and registrar of muslim marriages; appointed official, contrary to the <i>ulama</i> and <i>kiyayi</i> .
<i>perjuangan</i>	struggle; particularly radical struggle extending up from the base of society.
<i>pesantren</i>	Muslim boarding school for religious education.

- pribumi* (or *asli*) indigenous Indonesian, excluding Indonesians of Chinese descent; used particularly to denote businessmen.
- priyayi* originally aristocratic royal officials; later integrated into the Indonesian colonial civil service (*pamong praja*); Javanese aristocracy and other well-educated people (in the bureaucracy, the free professions, politics) who conform to *priyayi* traditions.
- santri* devout 'orthodox' Muslim.
- ulama* Muslim scholar, scribe and teacher.
- zuil* pillar; 'vertical' socio-cultural group containing various social, political and cultural organizations comprised of different classes and held together by a religious and/or political ideology.

ABBREVIATIONS OF ORGANIZATIONS

BIMAS	(Bimbingan Massal). Mass guidance, agricultural extension service.
BTI	(Barisan Tani Indonesia). Peasants' Front.
Bulog	(Badan Urusan Logistik Nasional). Government rice purchasing agency.
Comintern	(Kommunistische Internationale). Communist International.
CPH	(Communistische Partij, Holland). Communist Party of the Netherlands.
Golkar	(Golongan Karya). Functional Groups – the official state supported party.
Hizbullah or Barisan Hizbullah	– Army of Allah.
ISDV	(Indische Sociaal-Demokratische Vereeniging). Indian Social-Democratic Association.
KAMI	(Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia). Indonesian Student Action Front.
Masyumi	(Majelis Sjuro Muslimin Indonesia). Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims.
Nasakom	(Nasionalisme, Agama, Kommunisme). Soekarno's doctrine to blend Nationalism, Religion and Communism into one State ideology.
NU	(Nahdatul Ulama). Traditionalist orthodox Islam party.
Parmusi or PMI	(Partai Muslimin Indonesia). Indonesian Muslim Party.
PCF	(Parti communiste français). Communist Party of France.
Permesta	(Piagam Perjuangan Permesta). Charter of Common Struggle.
Pertamina	(Perusahaan Tambang Minyak Negara). State oil and mining
Perti	(Pergerakan Tarbijah Islamijah). Islamic Education Movement.
Pesindo	(Pemuda Sosialis Indonesia). Socialist Youth of Indonesia.
PETA	(Pembela Tanah Air). Fatherland Defence Force.
PI	(Perhimpoean Indonesia). Indonesian Union.
PKI	(Partai Komunis Indonesia). Indonesian Communist Party.
PNI	(Partai Nasionalis Indonesia). Indonesian Nationalist Party.
PPKI	(Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia). Committee for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence.
PPP	(Partai Persatuan Pembangunan). Development Unity Party.
PPPKI	(Permoefakatan Perhimpoean Politiek Kebangsaan Indonesia). Union of Political Associations of the Indonesian People.
PRRI	(Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia). Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia.

PSI	(Partai Sosialis Indonesia). Indonesian Socialist Party.
RTC	(Ronde Tafel Conferentie). Round Table Conference.
Sabilillah or Barisan Sabilillah	Military Corps that follows the Road of Allah.
Sarbupri	(Sarekat Buruh Perkebunan Republik Indonesia). Association of Estate Workers.
SDAP	(Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiders Partij). Social-Democratic Labour Party of the Netherlands.
Sekber Golkar	see: Golkar.
SI/PSI	(Sarekat Islam / Partai Sarekat Islam). Islamic Association Partv.
SOBSI	(Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia). All Indonesia Central Organization of Workers; i.e. Trade Union Federation.
VOC or VOIC	(Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie). United East Indian Company.
VSTP	(Vereeniging voor Spoor- en Tramweg Personeel). Union of Railway and Tramway Personnel.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SELECTED PERIODICALS

- Archipel : études interdisciplinaires sur le monde insulindien*, Paris, no. 1, 1971—.
- AS* = *Asian Survey*, Berkeley, Cal., vol. 1, 1961/62 — (continuation of *Far Eastern Survey*).
- Asia Quarterly : A Journal from Europe*, Bruxelles, 1971 — (continuation of *Revue du Sud-Est Asiatique et de l'Extrême Orient* [*RSEA*]).
- BIES* = *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Canberra, A.C.T., vol. 1, 1965—.
- BKI* = *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (van Nederlands Indië), 's-Gravenhage, vol. 1, 1853—.
- CSSH* = *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, The Hague etc., vol. 1, 1958/59—.
- ENI* = *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 's-Gravenhage etc., 1917-1937. 8 vols.
- FEQ* = *Far Eastern Quarterly : Review of Eastern Asia and the Adjacent Pacific Islands*, New York, vol. 1, 1940 — vol. 15, 1955 (continued as *Journal of Asian Studies* [*JAS*]).
- FES* = *Far Eastern Survey*, New York, vol. 1, 1931 — vol. 30, 1961 (continued as *Asian Survey* [*AS*]).
- HWV* = *Het Vrije Woord : algemeen onafhankelijk halfmaandelijksch orgaan*, Semarang, vol. 1, 1915 — vol. 7, 1921.
- IFM* = *Indonesia, Feiten en Meningen*, Amsterdam, vol. 1, 1974 — (continuation of *Indonesië informatie*).
- IMM* = *Indonesië van maand tot maand*, Leiden, 1971-1973.
- Indonesia*, Ithaca, N.Y., no. 1, 1966—.
- JAS* = *Journal of Asian Studies*, Ann Arbor, Mich., vol. 16, 1956— (continuation of *Far Eastern Quarterly* [*FEQ*]).
- JCA* = *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, London etc., vol. 1, 1970—.
- JSEAH* = *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Singapore, vol. 1, 1960-vol. 10, 1969 (continued as *Journal of Southeast Asian History* [*JSEAS*]).
- JSEAS* = *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Singapore, vol. 1, 1970— (continuation of *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* [*JSEAH*]).
- Kol. Studiën* = *Koloniale Studiën*, Weltevreden etc., vol. 1, 1916—.
- KS* = *Kabar Seberang : Sulating Maphilindo*, [Townsville, Qld.] no. 1, 1977—.
- NLR* = *New Left Review*, London, no. 1, 1960—.
- PA* = *Pacific Affairs*, Richmond, Va., vol. 1, 1928—.
- La Pensée : Revue du rationalisme moderne*, Paris, no. 1, 1939—.
- RIMA* = *Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs*, Sydney, vol. 1, 1967—.
- RSEA* = *Revue du sud-est asiatique et de l'Extrême Orient*, Bruxelles, 1967-1970 (continuation of *Revue du sud-est asiatique*; continued as *Asia Quarterly*).
- TBG* = *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunden*, (Koninklijke Bataviaasch Genootschap voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen), Batavia, vol. 1, 1853—.

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INTRODUCTION

At a fairly early stage of socialism's penetration into the Afro-Asian world, a handful of European social democrats established an Indian Social-Democratic Association (ISDV). They did so in a country, Indonesia, that was economically little developed and far away from any of the centres of European socialism and Asiatic radical-nationalism. The ISDV was soon able to bring its influence to bear on sections of the urban proletariat and to build up an Indonesian revolutionary movement. This occurred in sharp competition with a nascent nationalist leadership, and then without the usual intermediary role played by radicalizing groups of native intelligentsia. In this way, Dutch social democrats laid the foundations for one of the first communist parties in Asia and Africa, a party which was destined to become one of the few communist mass parties of the Third World. However, in contrast to the major communist movements of China-Vietnam, this Indonesian party was to demonstrate a basic weakness: successive and catastrophic defeats.¹

If we leave out Japan, the only non-Western country where a capitalist industrial revolution occurred, we see that foreign and particularly Western minorities frequently did play a dominant role in the initial and formative phases of the socialist and workers' movements of the Afro-Asiatic world. This was specifically the case in so-called *colonies de peuplement*, such as South Africa, Algeria and Palestine,² where the membership was principally confined to segments of the privileged European colonial elite. In the Middle East, in such countries as Egypt and Turkey, the Greeks and Jews, Armenians and Bulgarians initially controlled the socialist movement and sometimes the early communist movement; in the case of colonial Egypt they continued to do so long after a truly authentic Turkish organization had been set up in Turkey in 1912. The Iranian socialist movement devel-

Notes to this chapter may be found on pp. 9-10.

oped chiefly in Baku, strongly influenced both directly and indirectly by Russian and Caucasian socialists.³

In itself, therefore, the role played by Europeans and other foreigners in the development of socialist and communist movements in Asia and Africa is not so unusual. The difference with the Indonesian situation was that the Asian and African countries already mentioned enjoyed far greater degrees of political independence and/or autonomy, their modern intelligentsia were of longer standing and of greater vitality, and remained far more closely in touch with European social democrats and the ideological influence emanating from their organizations.

India's communist party was rather late in developing and lacked a social-democratic prelude. In China, an early movement that was not immediately political and only semi-socialist, flourished briefly from 1911 to 1912-13, without leaving any tangible organizational trace to indicate any continuity with the Marxist groups that emerged between 1918-19 and 1920 or the communist party of 1921.⁴

In this early pre-Russian Revolution period, Indonesia was the only country of Southeast Asia where a genuine socialist movement existed prior to the emergence of the communist party. In Eastern Asia such an event had so far only occurred in Japan, at that time the most developed country, and already equipped with a large working class.⁵ In Southeast Asia, communist parties usually arose only after long periods of political predominance by nationalist movements. In such instances foreigners were generally of very minor significance, the exception being the French social democrats of Vietnam who were joined in the course of time by 30 Vietnamese socialists — during the 1946-51 fight for independence, the latter were found mostly on the side of the nationalist movement.⁶

Apart from the Middle East, therefore, there is no evidence of any serious European activity with the aim of developing a socialist movement among the indigenous populations. Such activities among members of the Western upper and middle strata in a colonial society, that broke through ethnic-cultural class barriers and resulted in the foundation of first an indigenous socialist and later a communist workers' movement, apparently occurred only in Indonesia. In general, in most South and East Asian countries the formation of autochthonous communist organizations was preceded by a period in which a national, and eventually a nationalist, movement developed.⁷

Communism as a movement was certainly a late phenomenon in

most of Southeast Asia. Its rise there and in various other parts of Asia was frequently linked to the activities of the Communist International (whose influence, incidentally, barely reached as far as Indonesia) or of foreign communist parties.⁸ In Indonesia, organizational and political cohesion following the foundation of the social democratic movement remained surprisingly strong. Elsewhere, in Turkey, India, China and Japan for example, socialist and/or Marxist groups first appeared on the scene, to give rise in due course to socialist or communist organizations.⁹ Another factor, probably related to the preceding, is that where, with the exception of Indonesia, there were early signs of socialism (in the Near East and in Japan, for example), there was little evidence of any initial radical Marxist leadership.¹⁰

The presence in Indonesia of radical socialist elements can only be properly understood within the framework of the presence of large colonial European and Eurasian minorities. This *présence européenne* (the exception is Palestine) formed a deviating pattern in Asia.¹¹ It was quite different from the more exclusive colonial enclave communities in Africa, where socialist breakthroughs to the indigenous population were unthinkable.

Special mention should be made of the considerable autonomy enjoyed by the socialist and communist movements in Indonesia, due partly to the country's relative isolation, geographical and otherwise. This contrasted sharply with the colonial 'patronage' relationship which for some time existed between the communist party in Algeria and that in the French metropolis.¹² A significant factor for the introduction of socialism into Asia and Africa was the mobility of indigenous intellectuals and students who returned to their own countries after having studied in the West. Students also came into contact with socialist notions at local universities. This, however, was not the case in Indonesia. At the time that the ISDV made its appearance, very few Indonesians were studying in the Netherlands (or elsewhere in the Western world), and knowledge of nationalist and radical-socialist ideologies was minimal. So, at that time there was no movement of a nationalist or radical-socialist nature. Serious contacts between Indonesian students and the workers' movement of the West did not occur until the second half of the 1920s, and then mainly between the Perhimpoeaan Indonesia, the CPH (the Communist Party of Holland) and the Comintern.¹³ The cordial relationship between the three leaders of the Indian Party, who had been exiled in 1913, and the SDAP (Social-Democratic Labour Party of the Netherlands)