

# SITES, BODIES AND STORIES

Imagining Indonesian History

Edited by  
Susan Legêne,  
Bambang Purwanto &  
Henk Schulte Nordholt

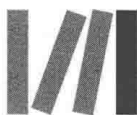


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## **SITES, BODIES AND STORIES**



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Shortly after 2000, the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam decided to finally face a serious problem: the collection legacy of the colonial academic discipline of physical anthropology. The museum wished to find out what these orphaned collections meant and how they should be handled. This was the start of an intense exchange of views, ideas and knowledge, which was finally channelled into “Sites, Bodies and Stories”, a new research programme on the dynamics of heritage formation in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia and the Netherlands. Over time many experts became involved—from academia, the museum sector and NGOs. The present volume shows the many directions the consultations and investigations took. The research programme was funded mainly by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), with an additional PhD grant from the Yayasan Arsanti Djojohadikusumo. Financial and practical support came also from the Faculty of Cultural Sciences at Universitas Gadjah Mada (Yogyakarta), the Faculty of Arts at VU University Amsterdam, the Eijkman Institute for Molecular Biology (Jakarta), the NIOD Institute of Holocaust, War and Genocide Studies (Amsterdam), KITLV (Jakarta and Amsterdam), and finally the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam. We thank Sangkot Marzuki and the Eijkman Institute staff for their hospitality whenever we met in Jakarta. Peter Romijn was the perfect host for us at NIOD, Gert Oostindie at KITLV, and Wayne Modest at the Tropenmuseum.

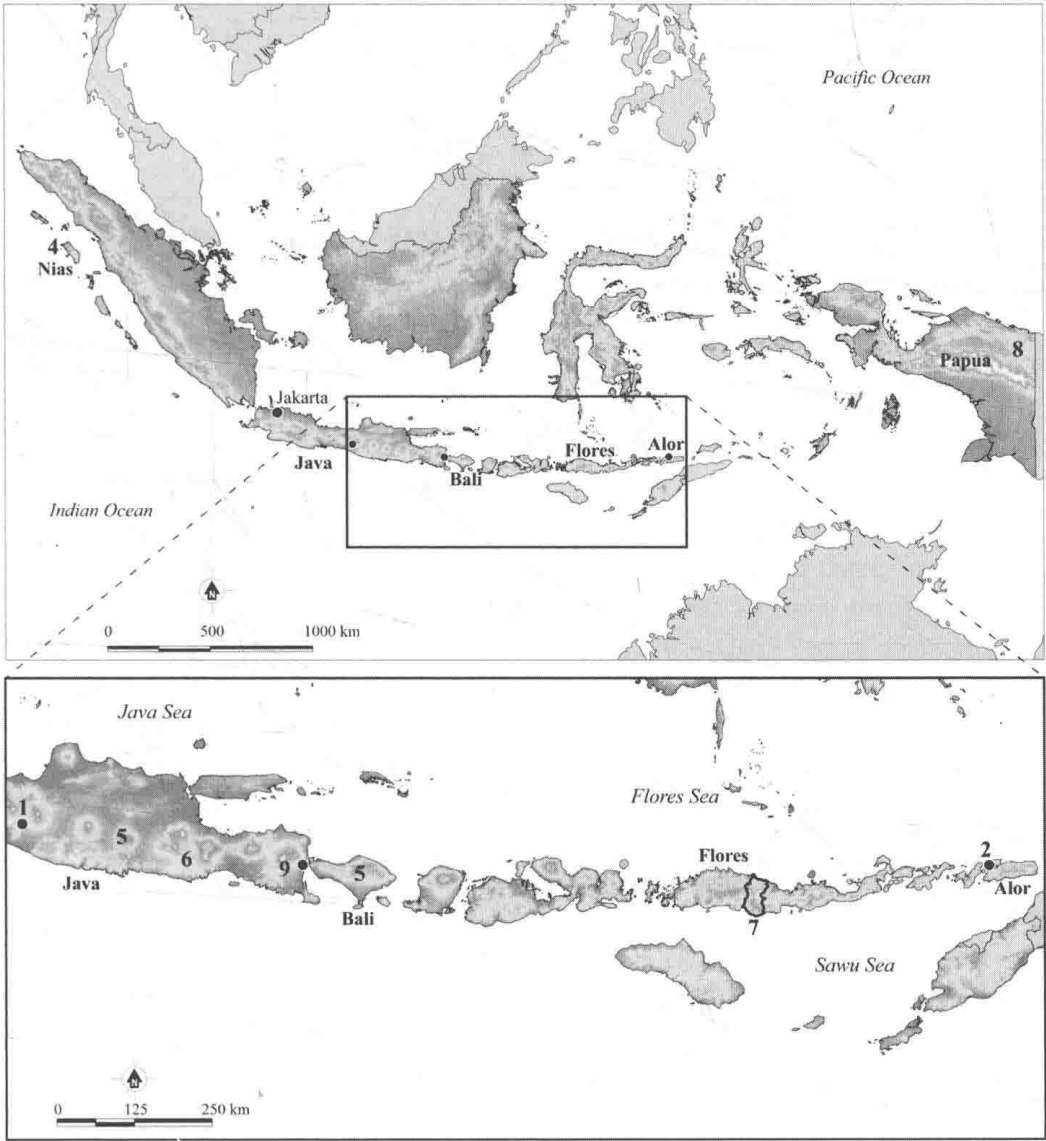
Many people over the years have been involved in and contributed to the Sites, Bodies and Stories project. Among those who from the very start were involved in the discussions on physical anthropology and its legacies, we would like to mention Koos van Brakel, David van Duuren, the late Victor Kaisiëpo, Micha ten Kate, Sangkot Marzuki, Wuryantari Setiadi, Herawati Sudoyo, Claudia Surjadjaja and Steven

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**Susan Legêne, Bambang Purwanto and  
Henk Schulte Nordholt**



The numbers in the map refer to the locations that are central to the different chapters in this book, as follows:  
1 = Borobudur (Java); 2 = Bampalola (Alor); 3 = Amsterdam (not in this map); 4 = Nias; 5 = Java and Bali; 6 = Java; 7 = Ngadha (Flores);  
8 = Papua; 9 = Banyuwangi (Java)  
Maps by Jaap Fokkema, VU.

**Figure 0.1.** Map of Indonesia; inset: specific locations on Java, Flores and Alor.



# Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
------------------------	-----

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
-------------------------	----

Introduction: Imagining Heritage and Heritage as Imagined History	1
SUSAN LEGÈNE AND HENK SCHULTE NORDHOLT	

## **PART 1. SITES: Borobudur and Bampalola**

1. Decolonizing Borobudur: Moral Engagements and the Fear of Loss	33
<i>The Netherlands, Japan and (Post)Colonial Heritage Politics in Indonesia</i>	
MARIEKE BLOEMBERGEN AND MARTIJN EICKHOFF	
2. Heritage in Alor: Sustaining Local Identity in a Globalized World	67
EMILIE WELLFELT	

## **PART 2. BODIES: The Netherlands, Nias, Java and Bali**

3. Ethnicity or Culture: The Career of Mannequins in (Post)Colonial Displays	89
WILLEM WESTERKAMP	
4. Heritage of Racial Science: Facial Plaster Casts from the Netherlands Indies	113
FENNEKE SYSLING	



5. Representing Java and Bali in Popular Film, 1919–54: Sites of Performance, Extra-daily Bodies, Enduring Stories 132  
MATTHEW ISAAC COHEN

### **PART 3. STORIES: Java, Ngadha, Papua and Banyuwangi**

6. Defining *Wayang* as Heritage: Standardization, Codification and Institutionalization 159  
SADIAH BOONSTRA
7. *Peu Pado*—A New Direction: Arranging Indonesian Modern Identity and Reinventing the *Foi* Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Ngadha Region of Central Flores 180  
TULAR SUDARMADI
8. Singing for Unity: Mambesak and the Making of Papuan Heritage 199  
I NGURAH SURYAWAN
9. Outsiders and Stigma: Reconstruction of Local Identity in Banyuwangi 210  
SRI MARGANA
- About the Contributors* 232
- Index* 237

# List of Figures

Figure 0.1.	Map of Indonesia; inset: specific locations on Java, Flores and Alor.	xiii
Figure 0.2.	Bali Beach Hotel, September 2006, on the occasion of the centennial of the Puputan Badung.	22
Figure 0.3.	A play with hybrid identities in Jakarta.	22
Figure 1.1.	Discarded woodcarvings that once adorned a lineage house in Bampalola.	32
Figure 1.2.	Excerpt from the 1943 Japanese newsreel covering the official visit to Borobudur of Japanese Field Marshal Terauchi, accompanied by military officials.	38
Figure 1.3.	Yasujirō Furusawa (with a cigarette) during the excavation of the hidden foot in the autumn of 1943.	41
Figure 1.4.	Cover of the book <i>Borobudur</i> by Ijiri Susume (1924), on display in the Borobudur room in the museum that he founded in Himeji, now the Enzan Memorial Art Museum.	45
Figure 1.5.	Portrait of the Dutch archaeologist N.J. Krom, head of the Archaeological Service in the Dutch East Indies and host of Ijiri during his explorations at Borobudur in 1918, honoured in the Borobudur room in the Enzan Memorial Art Museum in Himeji.	46
Figure 2.1.	House of the Afen Lelang lineage in Bampalola village. Named Fet Lakatuil, this building has been an official heritage site in Alor since 1982.	72

Figure 2.2.	House of the Lamul Lelang Kotfal lineage in Bampalola. Named Baloi Bang (literally “Place of the Harvest Feast”), this house was designated as an official heritage site, or <i>obyek situs</i> , after the regime change in Indonesia in 1998.	74
Figure 2.3.	<i>Moko</i> drums, which were used as heirloom objects, on the veranda of the lineage house Fet Lakatuil at a harvest feast in 2009.	77
Figure 3.1.	Plaster casts from the Kleiweg collection at the Anatomical Laboratory in Amsterdam, c.1960.	88
Figure 3.2.	Jubilee exhibition with mannequins in the Colonial Museum in Amsterdam, 1938.	100
Figure 3.3.	Mannequin representing a Javanese puppeteer, Colonial Museum in Amsterdam, 1923.	101
Figure 3.4.	Three mannequins representing dancers, Colonial Museum in Amsterdam, 1923.	102
Figure 4.1.	Photographs of plaster casts published in J.P. Kleiweg de Zwaan’s <i>Die Insel Nias bei Sumatra</i> (1914).	125
Figure 4.2.	Nias casts displayed at the Rijksmuseum, 2013.	127
Figure 5.1.	Newspaper advertisement for the 1920 D.W. Griffith film <i>The Idol Dancer</i> , with Clarine Seymour playing the mixed-race “French, Java and Shimmy” dancer Mary.	136
Figure 5.2.	The 1933 German film <i>Insel der Dämonen</i> (Isle of Demons) was distributed under the title <i>Wajan</i> in the United States in 1938–39.	145
Figure 5.3.	Advertisement for the tropical-themed Balinese Cocktail Salon in Oakland, California.	147
Figure 6.1.	<i>Sanggar pamujan</i> , a holy place believed by locals to be where the body of Tawang Alun disappeared.	158
Figure 6.2.	Ki Manteb Soedharsono performing in Surabaya, 30 October 2010.	175

Figure 7.1.	Young girls playing the <i>foi</i> (bamboo flute), photographed by Father Paul Arndt, on display in Larantuka, Maumere, at the Museum Seminari Ledalero.	185
Figure 7.2.	A <i>foi doa</i> (double bamboo flute) from the Ngadha region on display in the National Museum, Jakarta.	186
Figure 7.3.	A selection of Ngadha ethnic pop VCDs.	193
Figure 7.4.	The cover of <i>Peu Pado</i> , a Ngadha ethnic pop VCD album.	194
Figure 8.1.	Mambesak Castle in the Loka Budaya Museum of Anthropology at Cenderawasih University in Jayapura, Papua Province.	201
Figure 8.2.	Youngsters from Manokwari, Papua, playing Mambesak music at a cultural festival.	203
Figure 8.3.	Mambesak dancing by young people in Manokwari.	204
Figure 9.1.	The statue of King Tawang Alun in the village of Macan Putih, Banyuwangi (monument built by Tim Independen).	213
Figure 9.2.	Menak Jingga in an old <i>Langendriyan Damarwulan</i> performance, late 1930s.	218
Figures 9.3a and 9.3b.	Three books by Haji Slamet Utomo on the controversial figure of Menak Jingga (2009) and the heroic figures of Agung Willes (2008) and Sayu Wiwit (2009); three drawings of these figures.	224

## INTRODUCTION



# Imagining Heritage and Heritage as Imagined History

SUSAN LEGÈNE AND HENK SCHULTE NORDHOLT

*Sites, Bodies and Stories*, the title of this book, refers to three “unfixed” concepts that have informed our approach to heritage formation in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia. *Sites* are archaeological field sites, excavations and monuments but also artefacts from or defined by sites, as well as stories about sites. As such, this notion of “sites” has the broader meaning of sites of remembrance, as in Pierre Nora’s famous project on France, *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Sites of Memory).<sup>1</sup> In our book, however, the notion of sites is even less fixed in one specific geographical space because it also embodies local and global connections. It is understood as a space of encounter, performance and exhibition, as a place that itself may travel, and which changes through the interaction between people as well as the relationship between people and objects. *Bodies* refers both to physical anthropology as a science of measuring differences between people, and to the contemporary meaning of its scientific legacy in biomedical research, which concerns human remains in museums, research on ethnic identification, or migration. Once again, the concept is broader than that. *Bodies* refers also to representations of people, as in dioramas, maps, photographs, art and movies, that are not directly related to a strict academic legacy. Finally, *stories* refers to performing arts and intangible heritage, and how through stories people engage with society and its history and address issues of inclusion and exclusion. Time and again stories present new expressions of intention, inspiration, talents, opportunities,

silences and expectation. By choosing certain media and audiences, the storyteller has many options as to how to relate to tradition or to a cultural canon.

It is evident that in the context of heritage formation the three concepts of sites, bodies and stories are mutually inclusive. The chapters in this book have been arranged in an order that privileges one or the other while also switching between past and present-day imagined histories. This allows for an interdisciplinary approach to heritage formation beyond established categories of art history or ethnography, as is also widely discussed within the museum sector, where essentialist notions of self and other resonate in collections and in exhibition practice (see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Ter Keurs 2007; Harris and O'Hanlon 2013; Scott 2013). This book addresses this interdisciplinary approach to heritage formation with reference to the three concepts of sites, bodies and stories through nine case studies on Indonesian and Dutch history and heritage. With its main focus on local and national strategies and practices in Indonesia "after Empire", it aims to investigate how references to the past and the making of heritage were used in the context of processes of colonial and postcolonial state formation. In doing so it explicitly aims to investigate the political dimensions of heritage formation. It discusses how history curricula, cultural institutions and heritage preservation policies link history to notions of citizenship—to a supposedly shared understanding of one's own and others' places in the history of the nation. To this end, it aims to move beyond colonial determinism and its postcolonial legacies.

## **WRITING HISTORY AND MAKING HERITAGE: A CROSS-MEDIA APPROACH**

Jawaharlal Nehru, in his famous Independence speech on 4 August 1947, explicitly evoked an ancient India that, finally free, would discover herself again.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, on 27 December 1949, in her speech that sealed the transfer of sovereignty to (the United States of) Indonesia, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands emphasized that the Netherlands would "assist the young nation in the tremendous task awaiting".<sup>3</sup> While Nehru declared the Indian nation, whatever its state borders, was older than British India, Juliana, suggesting that Indonesia began from scratch, referred to a few years of historical state formation within internationally acknowledged borders. Nehru's claim referred to

culture, not to legal citizenship or to the borders of a given territory. Juliana gave no indication whatsoever of an Indonesian cultural past that preceded national independence and thus proclaimed Indonesia heir to the Netherlands Indies. Nehru remained silent about Pakistan, and his reference to ancient culture smoothed the deep religious and social divides that accompanied the formation of a postcolonial state after the dissolution of British India; Juliana implicitly stated that despite the end of the Dutch colonial empire, nothing would change for the European part of her kingdom. Moreover, she entertained the illusion that Indonesia's regionally inclusive state motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, or "Unity in diversity", which is discussed in various chapters of this book, needed a federative concept of the Indonesian nation state closely allied to the Netherlands.

These two examples underline the sensitivities of postcolonial state formation against the backdrop of contested perceptions of culture and history and changing relationships between former colonizers and new independent nation states (Reid and Marr 1979; Anderson 1991; Chakrabarty 1992; Chatterjee 1993; Davies 1996; Cooper 2005; Elson 2008; Aldrich and Wards 2010; Lorenz 2010). To this day, the heritage domain is important in processes of cultural identification with the nation that refer to the history of that nation. Actors involved in such heritage dynamics include "state actors", artists, community leaders, members of grassroots movements, tourists, conservationists, as well as academics in many national, ethnic and gendered roles. State actors are policymakers aiming to centralize or decentralize national policies; to take over existing or develop new cultural infrastructures such as museums, theatres or festivals; and pursue international cultural diplomacy as in the context of UNESCO. The artists in this book include puppeteers, film-makers and musicians. Some chapters focus also on community leaders, motivated by religious, political or cultural ideas, and members of grassroots communities or tourists who initiate or respond to heritage initiatives. Finally, academics as also being heritage actors are discussed in some chapters. In their capacity as experts in archaeology, history, architecture, physical anthropology and cultural anthropology, they played—and continue to play—an important role in the codification and legitimation of heritage.

Deliberately or implicitly, these individual and institutional actors establish authoritative relationships to a "common past" that is rooted in the framework of the nation state. What is the impact of this national frame when it concerns heritage awareness and community

formation at the local level, for instance during the processes of administrative decentralization and regional autonomy in Indonesia after 2001?<sup>4</sup> How is it related to notions of citizenship? Developments in (post)colonial Southeast Asia were very different from those in Western Europe or the United States. Given the emphasis on the importance of citizenship for democratic consolidation, the field of citizenship studies has paid surprisingly little attention to the forms that democratic citizenship takes in postcolonial states. As will be argued below, heritage politics play an important role in cultural citizenship in which local or national histories are addressed in different ways.

Writing history and making heritage are different but intimately intertwined practices that operate in local, national and international contexts. History and heritage, as this book underlines, represent and appeal to distinct but entwined relationships linking past and present.<sup>5</sup> Both historical understanding and heritage status are institutionally framed in words, objects and places; in memories, commemorations, readings and bodily experience; in school curricula, cultural canons, research agendas' budget allocations and legal frameworks. Historical sources have heritage value, while heritage tells histories. There are many ways of identifying and theorizing their differences, for instance with respect to the gendered historical genesis and contemporary agency of objects and texts. In short, one might say that historical narratives are constructions of the past, located in the past, and mostly based in textual sources, whereas a designation as heritage locates the past in the present. This distinction between history and heritage is not necessarily a difference between the past and the present: rather, it indicates different conceptions of time, "chronological" time and "durational" time. Chronological time might refer here to precolonial, colonial and postcolonial histories and durational time to how that past is active in the present. Durational time thus resists the closure that chronological time necessarily effects (Lorenz 2010: 84, referring to Lawrence Langer and Gabrielle Siegel; also Smith 1998; Tilmans et al. 2009; Bevernage 2012).

The various case studies in this book focus on heritage as a process that shapes relations with an imagined local or national history across media. As such a cross-media process, heritage formation is both a representation and a re-presentation, "a making present once again" (Hanna Pitkin [1967] quoted in Abbas 2010: 47). In heritage formation, orality, literacy and visibility play leapfrog. In this book orality relates to heritage practices of storytelling and performing, literacy to



fiction and nonfiction writing (historiography included), while visuality is the key to excavations, exhibition practices and the presentation of objects as well as the representation of identities.<sup>6</sup> Heritage formation as representing the past and making the past present again through orality, literacy and visuality implies various forms of agency and representation—acting on behalf of (people in the past), making a presentation of (something from the past), or acting/performing as if (being in the past). This happens, for instance, through exhibition making, collection formation, film, photography, performing on stages, excavating at sites, historiography or political rhetoric. The heritage actors discussed in this book—from “state actors” to artists, local historians to museum curators, and local audiences to international tourists—do sense past-present relationships; their imagined histories make these relationships sensible (Abbas 2010: 51; Barber and Peniston-Bird 2010: 1–11). The concepts of sites, bodies and stories help to frame and locate these dynamics, for instance on the world heritage site of Borobudur, or in a village on Alor or Flores, a stage in central Java, a museum in Amsterdam, a university in Papua, a burial place in Banyuwangi, or a cinema somewhere in the world.

## INDONESIA LOCAL AND GLOBAL

The contributors to this book, in addition to being academics from Indonesia and various European countries, are heritage actors. With their approaches to heritage formation from various disciplinary backgrounds, theoretical positions and epistemic locations, they are “interlocutors” who also contribute to the very same processes of heritage formation they study—for instance by deliberately invoking or deconstructing colonial origins of contemporary heritage. Moreover, some of them work in museums and produce exhibitions or collect objects; others actively support grassroots movements or combine their academic work with performing arts. Their critical approach aims to contribute to what Edward Said in his critique of the anthropological fieldwork of his time described as the “struggle with the formidable difficulties of empire” (Said 1989: 225). This struggle occurs also in the interdisciplinary heritage domain.

Frederick Cooper defines empire as “a political unit that is large, expansionist (or with memories of an expansionist past), and which reproduces differentiation and inequality among people it incorporates” (Cooper 2005: 27). With Indonesia as the focus, most of the essays in