

**PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF INDONESIA'S
FIRST TWO DECADES OF INDEPENDENCE:
THE ISSUE OF CHANGING IDENTITY**

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Early youth in the Netherlands Indies

- **Family background: typical Chinese Peranakan family, i.e. ethnic Chinese born in Indonesia for generations, and generally not speaking Chinese anymore**
- **Father's education at *Hollands-Chinese Kweekschool (HCK)* to become a teacher at a Dutch-Chinese primary school (HCS); Mother's initial education at a Chinese school: Her father was co-founder of a Chinese primary and secondary school for girls (*Tiong Hoa Li Hak Hau*); my mother later switched to a Dutch high school (*Drie-jarige HBS*), and later went to the Netherlands to study as a teacher**
- **Pre-school at a Catholic Froebel school at Jalan Batutulis (1940-41)**
- **First year at European Primary School (*Europese Lagere School, ELS*, basically only open to European students) of the *Carpentier Alting Stichting (CAS)*, 1941-February 1942 because my father was a principal (*schoolhoofd*) at a HCS (Dutch –Chinese primary school) in Jakarta**
- **Awareness of looming Japanese threat at school among the pupils of our first class at the above ELS and at home (overhearing father's talks with Mr. Parijs, an Eurasian (in the Netherlands referred to as 'Indische Nederlander') married to a German woman**
- **Construction of 'phony' houses which fascinated me on *Waterlooplein* (Lapangan Banteng) to lure Japanese bomb attacks? Was it a kind of Potemkin village?**
- **Establishment of *Luchtbeschermingsdienst (LBD)*, Air Defense Service) which my father had to join**
- **After Japanese attack temporary flight with my mother, younger sister and younger brother to *Bintang* estate, owned by relatives near Cibadak, West Java. My father stayed behind in our house in Batavia, accompanied by a nice male assistant (*pembantu*).**
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Japanese occupation, 1

- **Recollection of arrival of Japanese troops welcomed by enthusiastic crowds at Koningsplein West (Medan Merdeka Barat), cheering the 'liberation' of the Netherlands Indies from the Dutch.**
- **Some changes: Batavia renamed Jakarta; term *Jepang* changed into *Nippon* or *Dai Nippon*; requirement to hoist Japan's *hinomaru* (rising sun) flag; Jakarta time shifted forward by two hours to Tokyo time, i.e. 6am became 8am; passing palace of *Saiko Sikikan* (Supreme Military Commander), former palace of Dutch Governor-General (G.G.) at Jl. Medan Merdeka Utara, one had to step down and bow to military guard.**
- **Establishment of Japanese schools (which I did not join), since Dutch education given by unemployed father who did not want me to enter a Japanese school and Chinese language education by my mother (since Japan was at war with China, and we were still Chinese nationals then; my father hid a Chinese nationalist flag in a cupboard))**
- **Playing with friends in neighbourhood (Eurasians, Ambonese, Manadonese): imitating Japanese soldiers in nearby military camp, e.g. swordfights made from sticks, *sumo* wrestling.**
- **Watching Indonesian and Japanese movies with father (e.g. *Topeng Setan*, which frightened me, and *Sina no Yoru*, 'China by night' about a courageous Japanese military officer married to a Chinese girl whose brother was an anti-Japanese 'terrorist'.**
- **Increasing awareness of rising poverty around our neighbourhood, as many beggars only dressed in gunni sacks roamed in our neighbourhood.**

Japanese occupation, 2

- Reading Indonesian language newspaper '*Kung Yung Pao*', run by Oey Tiang Tjoei, loyal to pro-Japanese Chinese puppet president Wang Ching Wei based in Japanese-occupied Nanking; in an unintended way through reading this newspaper, I could follow the steady retreat of Japanese army to Japan's homeland (remember reading news in the above paper about ferocious battles on Okinawa)
- All radio's sealed by Japanese authorities, so only news provided by *Domei*, Japanese press bureau, and Japanese-approved newspapers; father's car Citroen confiscated by Japanese authorities and never returned.
- Watching emaciated, half-naked Dutch, Australian and British prisoners of war engaged in road construction on Jalan Baljuw, near Jalan Mangga Besar (former *Prinsenlaan*)
- Watching Indonesian auxiliary soldiers (*heiho*), trained by the Japanese army, marching along Jakarta's streets
- Billboards on Jakarta's roads, e.g. *Amerika kita linggis, Inggris kita seterika* (we will flatten America, and iron out England)
- People exhorted to plant *jatropha* (*jarak*) trees which produced bio-fuels?
- Visits of German sailors (coming by U-boats) to Mr. Parijs's house who were welcomed by his German wife. First sight of white men who were not emaciated like the POWs.

Indonesia's national revolution, 1

- **Marches by Indonesian youth (*pemuda*) flying the Indonesian flag, *merah putih*' for the first time.**
- **Subscription to Indonesian newspaper *Merdeka* (editor" Burhanuddin Diah of the 1945 generation) which reported extensively on the revolution.**
- **House of Mr. Parijs (who suddenly disappeared, perhaps killed) occupied by friendly *pemuda*, Indonesia's young freedom fighters, whom I used to visit.**
- **Recollection that Japanese officer in neighbourhood (Jalan Alaydrus near our house) was killed, perhaps to acquire his weapons.**
- **Reoccupation of Jakarta by British troops, including Indian and Gurkha troops, under the command of General Chistisan; first personal meeting near our house with a Scottish soldier of the Seaford Highlanders near our neighbourhood. Newspaper report on the 10 November battle in Surabaya when Brigadier-General Mallaby of the British-Indian army was killed.**
- **After re-entry of Dutch army in Batavia, Dutch schools reopened. I joined the sixth grade Christian primary school located on our street, where we were taught first by Ms. Syaranamual, an Amboynese teacher, and later by Mr. van Dorp, a Dutch military officer**
- **On 10 March 1947 I joined *Herstel HBS Cideng* which provided accelerated, shortened secondary education (seven months instead of 10 months); later moved to location behind CAS, and renamed *HBS Koningsplein* (located on present- day Medan Merdeka Timur)**
- **Subscription to Dutch newspapers '*De Javabode* en '*Het Dagblad*'**

Indonesia's national revolution, 2

- In early 1950 Koningsplein HBS renamed '*Sekolah Menengah Atas, SMA-Istimewa*, since Dutch teachers still continued teaching old curriculum; only change: Indonesian language lessons increased from three to five per week, while French became optional course, although German and English were still mandatory courses
- Awareness of independence war in the late 1940s, since Dutch newspapers reported skirmishes with Indonesian freedom fighters, referred to as 'extremists'; short documentary movies about Indonesian-Dutch negotiations in Linggajati, Renville, Kaliurang, and the first and second '*politioenele acties*' (referred to as *Agresi Belanda pertama dan kedua* by Indonesians)
- Occasional hit-and-run attacks on Dutch soldiers, e.g. bomb attack at a café in Senen visited by Dutch soldiers
- On 28 December 1949 I watched triumphant re-entry of President Sukarno in front of Jalan Pintu Air (then still named '*Sluisbrugstraat*') after official transfer of sovereignty from the Netherlands to Indonesia on 27 December 1949. On that day the Dutch tricolor was lowered for the last time, and Mr. Beel, the High Representative of the Crown (*Hoge Vertegenwoordiger van de Kroon*) returned to the Netherlands. It was the final end of the Netherlands Indies which some Dutch referred to as '*Tropisch Nederland*' (The Tropical Netherlands).

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Early years of independence in the 1950s, 1

- After graduation from SMA-Istimewa, enrolled at the Faculty of Economics, University of Indonesia (FEUI) in September 1952
- Majority of FEUI's faculty still Dutch professors, including Prof. Emile van Konijnenburg, first Director of Garuda Indonesian Airways, Prof. Kraal, Prof. Scheffer (later Rector of *Katholieke Economische Hogeschool Tilburg*), Prof. van der Velde, Prof. Weinreb, Prof. van der Straaten (who inspired me with his lectures on economic history), Drs Ormeling (author of the classic book *The Timor Problem*); Indonesian faculty members included Prof. Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, Dean of FEUI, Prof. Tan Goan Po, Secretary of FEUI, Professor Mr. Djokosutono, Dr. J.E. Ismail, and Soeriaatmadja who taught *Koperasi* (Cooperatives).
- After steady deterioration in relations with The Netherlands, gradual exodus of Dutch faculty members. Last Dutch professor (Prof. van der Straaten left in late 1957) after farewell party attended by Subroto, MA, Secretary of FEUI.
- Before PRRI rebellion, Prof. Sumitro fled Jakarta to join PRRI rebels. Later Prof. Tan Goan Po fled Jakarta to join Prof. Sumitro in voluntary exile in Hong Kong
- Under affiliation program with The University of California, Berkeley, previously arranged by Prof. Sumitro, American professors and lecturers, including Prof. Bruce Glassburner, Prof. Leon Mears, Professor Malcolm Davisson, Professor Don Blake, and Hans Schmitt, MA and Ralph Anspach, MA replaced Dutch professors. In general we students did not experience any difficulties with lectures in English because many of us had attended Dutch senior high schools with its solid instruction in English, German, French, and Indonesian.

Early years of independence, 2

- After relatively quiet years in early 1950s, political conditions deteriorated as parliamentary democracy crumbled and relations with the Netherlands deteriorated because of West Irian issue. After deadlock at the Constituent Assembly (*Konstituante*) about the philosophical basis of the Indonesian state (Pancasila or Islam) President Sukarno issued Presidential Decree on 5 July 1959, decreeing a return to the Constitution of 1959 involving a presidential cabinet and the introduction of 'Guided Democracy' and 'Guided Economy', involving Indonesian-style socialism (*Sosialisme a la Indonesia*).
- In the 1950s strong anti-Chinese sentiments were palpable, as a.o. reflected by the *Gerakan Assaat* (Assaat movement) which advocated affirmative policies to promote indigenous Indonesian (*Indonesia asli*) businessmen
- Economic conditions also deteriorated after takeover and subsequent nationalisation of all Dutch enterprises in Indonesia in late 1957, respectively 1959, and expulsion of Chinese aliens (non-Indonesian citizens) from rural areas, specifically West Java, according to Government Regulation no. 10/1959, which led to anti-Chinese actions and exodus of about 200,000 ethnic Chinese to China. Also action against 'stateless' Chinese (loyal to Taiwan after alleged involvement of Taiwan in PRRI rebellion)
- In early 1960s increasing political polarization between ascendant Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and its weakening anti-communist opponents, tagged as '*nekolims*' (neo-colonialists) in rabidly leftist newspapers '*Bintang Timur*', *Harian Wartabhakti* (formerly *Sin Po*) and *Harian Rakyat*.

Early years of independence, 3: Problems of identity

- Experienced personal problems of identity, particularly for Indonesians of Chinese descent but culturally Dutch-oriented (Dutch-speaking Sino-Indonesians, like me) and to a much lesser extent also for Chinese-oriented and Chinese-speaking Sino-Indonesians.
- According to provisions of Round Table Conference (RTC) all people born in Indonesia (Chinese, Indians, Eurasians, Arabs) automatically became Indonesian citizens. However, because of *jus sanguinis* interpretation of citizenship by the Chinese government, Indonesian government felt it necessary to sign Sunarjo-Chou En Lai Agreement in 1955 (after first Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung). Under this agreement all Sino-Indonesians intent on keeping their Indonesian citizenship had to sign a declaration in front of a court judge that they rejected Chinese citizenship. I signed this declaration in front of a court judge in Jakarta in 1961. This declaration became proof of Indonesian citizenship and until recently had to be shown to officials, for instance when one applied for a passport or a personal identity card, referred to as KTP (*kartu tanda penduduk*).
- After 1955 more anti-Chinese actions and campaigns erupted, e.g. *Gerakan Assaat* (Assaat Movement) which called for affirmative actions for national (i.e. indigenous Indonesian) entrepreneurs, and after the ban on Chinese alien (non-Indonesian) traders from the rural areas according to Government Regulation no. 10/1959 (P.P. no. 10/1959). Anti-Chinese sentiments aggravated by aggressive defense of these Chinese traders by staff of the Chinese embassy.

Early years of independence, 4, problems of identity

- **Problem for Sino-Indonesians caused by historical problem of ‘double colonialism’ (Dutch and Chinese)? (term coined by the late Professor Everett D. Hawkins of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, who in 1964-65 worked as consultant to Leknas-LIPI under its cooperation with the Harvard Development Advisory Service (Harvard DAS) which later became HIID.**
- **Sharp antagonism among Sino-Indonesians between adherents of ‘*assimilation*’ (led by Sindhunata (Chris Ong Tjong Hay), Auwyong Peng Koen (P. K. Oyong, founder of Kompas daily, Ong Hok Ham, etc.) and those of ‘*integration*’, notably leftist Baperki (*Badan Permusyawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia*) led by Siauw Giok Tjhan, one of the few Sino-Indonesians of the 1945 generation). I did not sympathize with neither, since I felt ‘assimilationists’ negated any Chinese identity they had, while I found the supercharged ‘supernationalism’ of the ‘integrationists’ superficial, hypocritical, and dangerous because of their close ties with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).**
- **On personal level problem of identity finally resolved when I, upon graduation from FEUI on 30 June 1959, was accepted by the Indonesian Council for the Sciences (*Majelis Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia, MIPI*) on 1 September 1959. I was accepted and treated like any other Indonesian, and for the first time really felt and identified as an Indonesian (albeit of Chinese origin), a feeling and identification which has lasted until today.**