HISTORICAL STUDY AND HISTORIANS IN
INDONESIA TODAY
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It should be plainly stated that historical study and writing in Indonesia have so far played a very slight part in academic work, but there is reason to expect that this situation will change in the years to come. Indonesia entered the postwar period with a heritage consisting mostly of Dutch colonial historiography. Deeply affected by the national revolution in the cultural scene, particularly in the field of history, a reconstruction and rewriting of Indonesian history was urgently felt. Many conceptions had to be reviewed and many facts reinterpreted. A growing acceptance of this new approach has come to focus historical study on old regional or local sources on the one hand and the formulation of the idea of the history of Indonesia as a national history on the other.

Furthermore, notable also is the growing interest in history which manifests itself in the bulk of published material on popular historical works, dealing mostly with the biography of national heroes. Leaving all these works to their own value, our attention turns primarily to collective activities promoting historical study.

The first mark of the new cultural orientation is the establishment of a governmental body, called the Committee for National History, in 1952. Its aim is the promotion of historical study and writing of the history of Indonesia as National History in contrast to colonial history, which was the case prior to Independence.

As a momentous event in the development of historical study in Indonesia we can recall the Seminar in History at the close of 1957, held in Jogjakarta, the capital of the Republic of Indonesia during the physical revolution. It was sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture with full cooperation of the University of Indonesia and Gadjah Mada University. In brief, the main problems put forward and discussed at length on the Seminar are the following:

1. The philosophical conception of National History
2. The periodization of the history of Indonesia
3. Criteria for the writing of textbooks on National History
4. The teaching of history
5. The training of historians and history teachers
6. The use and conservation of historical material
Besides the cultural need for a new approach these topics refer to theoretical and practical problems as well, owing to the relevant interdependence between the two.

We may well point out the successful attainment of the Seminar, firstly in arousing public interest in and enthusiasm for its own history, secondly in defining the exact meaning of National History with its Indonesia-centric point of view and thirdly the growing awareness of the important role of history in the education of citizens.¹

In the subsequent period more activities from the side of the government as well as from private groups interested in History could be observed, the concretization of which took place by setting up organizations for the promotion of historical study, among others the following: The Institute for History and Anthropology, founded in 1958. It is a governmental body aimed at the advancement of historical study generally and the rewriting of history textbooks for elementary and secondary schools in particular.² The following year witnessed the establishment of the Indonesian Scientific Institute for Historical Research as a private organization.³ The main objective of this foundation is to maintain and to promote historical survey of the Indonesian and other peoples of Malayan origin, particularly Malayan and modern Indonesian history. At about the same time the Association for the Advancement of National History came into existence, also with the status as a private body with the broad membership of all those interested in history.⁴ Mention should also be made of the Institute for the writing of the history of Indonesia, founded in 1961 by Professor Muhammad Yamin.⁵ A considerable amount of historical work has been done by the Centre for Military History located in Bandung.⁶ This Institute can be regarded as a continuation and extension of the prewar historical section of the Indonesian Navy has also been set up recently. Last

3. Address: Lembaga Ilmiah Indonesia untuk penjelidikan Sedjarah, djalan Gresik 27, Djakarta.
5. Address: Lembaga Penulisan Sedjarah Natal, djalan Diponegoro 10, Djakarta. Its library is located in Kaliurang, a hilltown near Jogjakarta.
6. Address: Pusat Sedjarah Militer, djalan Belitung 6, Bandung. Branches of this institute have been established throughout Indonesia. Currently preparing an Indonesian Military History, to be published in 1964.
but not least one should not overlook the Research section of the Department of Foreign Affairs which is in charge with the records of Indonesian diplomacy. Historical journals are issued both by the Indonesian Scientific Institute for Historical Research and by the Centre for Military History, respectively the "Madjalah Penelitian Sedjarah" (Journal for Historical Research) and the "Madjalah Sedjarah Militer" (Journal for Military History). Prior to these two publications a scientific periodical of wide reputation, the "Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen" contained numerous articles on historical subjects besides those on geography, philology and anthropology.

It should be noted here that at this stage of development writings on history are still scattered in various publications, scientific and popular, for example, one can mention the "Medan Ilmu Pengetahuan" issued by the Council for Sciences of Indonesia since 1958. A number of journals published by Universities are also in this category.

The visible decrease in activities in historical research during several years in the sixth decade was due to a great lack in manpower. On account of the same fact the historical institutions mentioned above did not make headway. On the other side the rapid growth of higher education after Independence brought about the establishment of Departments of History, the oldest of which is that of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Indonesia, closely followed by the History Department at Gadjah Mada University. One should not overlook the founding of Historical sections at the Faculty of Paedagogy, aiming at the training of competent teachers in history. In the meantime quite a number of students have graduated in history but we are still looking forward to the future when the historical institutions will be well equipped by a competent staff of historical research workers.

At the head of the list of holders of Indonesian history materials stands the National Archives, the custodian of the documents of the East Indian Company, the Interregnum British Government and the Government of Netherlands India. Up to World War II it had been responsible for housing records, both official and unofficial. By order of the Government of Netherlands India, van der Chijs was charged with compiling a guide, according to which documents are accumulated since 1602. A notable fact is that in accordance with the realm of activities of the East Indian Company, i.e. covering the searoute from Cape of Good Hope to Japan, sources relating to places outside Indonesia can be found in abundance.

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7. For information about documents in the National Archives consult Mr. J. A. van der Chijs: Inverteris van 't Lands Archief te Batavia, (1602-1816), Landsdrukkerij, Batavia, 1882.
Next to the National Archives as a depository of materials for Indonesian History is the Museum of the "Lembaga Kebudajaan Indonesia" formerly named the "Koninklijk Bataviasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen", founded in 1778. Conserving all sorts of publications, its library contains 250,000 volumes, among which a large collection of newspapers, local as well as national, written in various languages. Besides the library the Museum is in possession of the most extensive collection of manuscript pieces, mostly already catalogued among others by van Ronkel. While much material for local history is in the National Archives and the Museum, there are substantial quantities in the libraries of municipalities, provinces, procipalities and a few privately endowed institutions. Many of these have notable holdings of books and manuscripts, for instance the Sultan's library in Jogjakarta, "Tepas Kapujanggan", its counterpart in Solo, "Sana Pustaka". Helpful guides or descriptions of these collections are not yet available.

In addition to the collections maintained in the National Archives at Jacarta, major depositories of important records documents of the East Indian Company and the late Government of Netherlands India are located in: 1. the "Koloniale Archief" of the "Algemeen Rijksarchief" at the Hague; 2. the "Rijksarchief" at Utrecht; 3. the "Krijgsgeschiedkundig archief van de Generale Staf" in the Netherlands with its branch at Bandung. The first mentioned contains a large collection relating to the records of trade Companies from 1515 until 1814. The date span varies.

It should be pointed out that due to historical interest of visitors or officials in the past, manuscript collections that contain material bearing on Indonesian History are to be found in many cultural centres in Europe. Alphabetically listed these are Amsterdam, Berlin, Cambridge, Dresden, Hamburg, London, Madrid, Munchen, Oxford and Paris. Among the more significant are the following collections: 1. the collection housed in the Leyden University Library; 2. the collection possessed by the Ethnographical Museum of the Royal Colonial Institute at Amsterdam;

8. For description of manuscripts see Dr.Ph.S. van Ronkel: Catalogus Maleische Handschriften in het Museum van het Bataviasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, Verhandelingen No. LVII, 1909, Batavia - Den Haag.

9. Other local manuscript collections to be referred to are: a) the Kirtya Liefring-van der Tuuk in Den Passar, Bali; b) the Matthes Foundation in Makassar; c) the Sono Budojo in Jogjakarta; d) the Institute for Language and Culture in Djakarta. A considerable amount of manuscripts are still in private hands.
3. the collections in London's East India House, the British Museum and that one preserved by the Royal Asiatic Society. In this connection mention should be made of the Crawfurd and Raffles collection and also of the Bibliotheca Marsdenia.

Finally it is worthy to note that there are signs of an awakened interest in history which in certain instances reveals some of the enthusiasm of a rediscovery and which can be regarded as a response to changing patterns.

The following tentative list of historians and people interested in history can give some idea of the actual stage of historical study in Indonesia which to the author's mind is still in its infancy. As to the list no attempt has been made to give an evaluation or to qualify the persons involved. They are listed alphabetically.


Abdurrachman Surjomihardjo. Department of History, University of Indonesia. Co-editor of the collected writings of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, the founder of Taman Siswa.


R. Mohamad Ali. Director of the National Archives. Author of an introduction to the history of Indonesia; "pengantar Ilmu Sedjarah Indonesia", Bhratara, Djakarta, 1961, and many articles.


J.B. Ave. Anthropologist, University of Indonesia. Articles on prehistory.


Djokosoetono. Formerly Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Indonesia. Co-author of the history of customary law: "Sedjarah politik hukum adat", Djambatan, Djakarta, 1954.

Hazil. Publisher. Author of "Jawaharlal Nehru", Djambatan, Amsterdam, 1950; and "Teuku Umar dan Tjut Nja Din" Djambatan, Djakarta, 1952.


Ibrahim Alfian. Department of History, Gadjah Mada University. Research on "Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai".

Imam Supardi. Newspaperman. Author of many biographies of national leaders, e.g. Wahidin, Soetomo, Thamrin.


Machfudi Mangkudilaga. Assistant Director of the Historical Section of the Indonesian Navy. Articles on Maritime history.


Marwati Djuned Poesponegoro. Head of the Department of History, University of Indonesia.
Ida Bagus Made Mantra. Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Den Passar, Bali. Articles on Hindu culture.

Todung Gelar Sutan Gunung Mulia. President Christian University, Djakarta. Author of "India, Sedjarah politik dan pergerakan kebangsaan", Balai Pustaka, Djakarta, 1952


Oey Soan Nio. Faculty of Arts, University of Indonesia. Research on the Huang Ch'ao revolt.

Osman Raliby. Research bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Author of "Documenta Historica", Bulan Bintang, Djakarta, 1953; the history of Indonesian diplomacy. (to be published).

Armijn Pane. Formerly newspaperman. Author of works on World and Asian history.


Pitono Hardjowardojo. University of Airlangga. Articles on Indonesian Archaeology.


A.G. Pringgodigdo. Formerly President Airlangga University. Articles on the formative period of "Republik Indonesia".

R.M. Ng Purbatjaraka. Retired professor in Philology and Hindu-Indonesian Culture History. Numerous works since 1913.


Bahrum Rangkuti. Author of many works on the history of Islam and its culture.


Sartono Kartodirdjo. Head, Department of History, Gadjah Mada University. Articles in journals.

Siek Bing Yam. Faculty of Arts, University of Indonesia. Research on Cheng Ho.


Soedjatmoko. Publisher. Various Articles.

R.P. Soejono. Head of the Prehistorical Section of the Department of Archaeology. Articles on Prehistory.


Soeroto. Head of the Social Science Teaching Section. Ministry of Education and Culture. Author of textbook,

R.M. Soetjipto Wirjosoearto. Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Indonesia. Author of "Glimpses of the Cultural History of Indonesia", Djakarta n.d.; "Relation between Mahayana Buddhism and some monuments in Java", Djakarta; and various articles.

Tamardjaja. Newspaperman. Author of the biography of Indonesian leaders: "Pusaka Indonesia", Kolff; Djakarta, 1951.


Soebantardjo. Lecturer, Christian University, Salatiga. Author of textbooks.