

Introduction

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Previous meetings at Delhi, Leiden and Yogyakarta respectively had been devoted to the study of a major period of the colonial and pre-colonial history of India and Indonesia, working backwards from the twentieth to the seventeenth century. The final meeting was intended to sum up and develop the major themes of the series rather than to study a particular period. The two sessions during the first morning of the conference took a broad approach to the pre-colonial societies of India and Indonesia, viewing them through emergent religious traditions. In a genuinely comparative and theoretical paper, Professor Heesterman presented an overview of the 'Hindu frontier', taking this concept to mean not only a geographical but a cultural zone, and one which could still have meaning for the societies of South and Southeast Asia if only because Indianisation has given both areas a distinctive character. This distinctive character hinged on the interface of Sanskritic and indigenous culture: a shifting process of inter-penetration between the scriptural 'Great Tradition' and the local communities with their 'Little Traditions'.

Brahman and Buddhist establishments appear to have fulfilled roughly the same functions in the process of Indianisation and state development. Yet Buddhism mainly flourished along the trade routes and thus reached far out into non-Indianised space, while Brahman establishments tended to cluster in or around well-developed agricultural areas.

As a result, the Hindu frontier manifested itself in two ways, either through an 'inner frontier of settled and waste land' or abroad in the divide between coast and hinterland. In the final analysis, however, Heesterman feels that we are dealing with one and the same phenomenon. Discussion centred on the relative importance of the 'brahman' in the expansion of the 'Hindu frontier' in the two societies and on theoretical models which might explain the relatively greater degree of hierarchy which emerged in classical Indian society as opposed to Indonesian society.

Dr. Taufik Abdullah and Dr. Muzaffar Alam considered the Islamic history of the two societies. It is interesting to note that Heesterman's final remarks on

the replacement of Buddhism by Islam in the Indonesian archipelago were further developed by Dr. Taufik Abdullah who, in his paper 'Islam and the Formation of Tradition', argued that Islam in Indonesia presented a transcendent and unifying principle similar to that formerly represented by Buddhism. Implicitly he rejected the view that saw Muslim expansion largely in terms of commercial or political strategies. In some areas of the archipelago, Islam did indeed play a decisive role in the process of state formation while in others the new religion primarily had to deal with the question of structural accommodation. In both patterns of conversion the state served as a bridgehead in the Islamisation process. This theme was further worked out in the second part of the paper in which Dr. Taufik showed how Islam had been internalised through a formation process of tradition. Within this formation process interaction between the sultan as the centre of power and the symbol of the state on the one hand and the *ulama* as the legitimisers of power on the other hand played a crucial role. According to local needs and circumstances this interaction resulted in different solutions. In his conclusion Dr. Taufik pointed out several parallels to the Tamil Nadu case study presented by Dr. Susan Bayly at the Yogyakarta conference (*Itinerario* 1988-1).

Dr. Muzaffar Alam opened his lecture on 'Competition and Co-existence: Indo-Islamic Interaction in Medieval North India' by drawing attention to the fact that in the past most historical writing on the subject was geared to explaining the process of growing Hindu-Muslim discord since the early nineteenth century. Yet, judging from several serious attempts that recently have been made by Indian scholars to study the medieval period in its own terms, some of the stereotypes that have emerged in the earlier literature have proved hard to eradicate. Dr. Alam therefore had chosen to 'return to the sources' and use little known contemporary Persian literature to focus on some of the ideas and actions of religious and political authorities of the medieval period in connection with sufi attempts at accommodation. In doing so the author sought to explain why in India, unlike in Indonesia, the process of Islamisation encountered failure. Some of the stories of the performance of miracles by early sufi's in competition with yogi's that were presented by Dr. Alam served to show that contrary to the generally accepted image, the sufi's were not really so understanding and liberal towards other creeds. Segmentation could after all pose a threat to Islam and inevitably provoked a response from orthodox quarters. Thus legends glorifying Islam went hand in hand with cultural synthesis. Sufi's (who essentially formed a religious clan) actually rejoiced in competing in religious disputes with Hindu ascetics and displayed much interest in the philosophy of their rivals. Dr. Alam explained this paradox by pointing out that the Mughal rulers were only in conflict with those who challenged their political power, while they avoided any quarrel with the local population to whom they showed a liberal and tolerant attitude.

The Brahmanism that stood in the way of Islamic proselytizing was by no means a spent tradition. By the Middle Ages the brahman tradition had

finally absorbed Buddhism and had adopted tribal rituals and deities. In doing so it showed great dynamism and assimilative capacity. Under these circumstances the limits of accommodation on the part of the sufi's were surely tested. A mode of coexistence in public activities, however, was worked out between Hindus and Muslims even though their worlds remained segregated at the private level.

Discussion centred on regional differences and on the role and form of the state in the two societies and how this might help to explain the different pattern of Muslim expansion in India and Indonesia. According to Dr. Kolff, who acted as commentator on both papers, both authors seemed to agree that the historian has at his disposal two models with which to analyse historical reality. Firstly, there is the antagonistic one of a hegemonic Islam that is opposed by a resistant South or Southeast Asian society, be it Hindu, Buddhist, or anything else. Secondly, there is the model of a composite and syncretistic culture that gradually comes into being, whether by a fusion of sufi and bhakti elements or by a process centered on the royal court. Muzaffar Alam finds both models in India, though never in their pure ideal-typical form; historically speaking, North Indian history gradually moved away from the second and approached the first model. In Java, on the other hand, Taufik Abdullah argues the second model assumed great validity and a new tradition was formulated that triumphed over hegemonic Islam.

In a society in which a composite Islamic culture came into being, an element of competition served to bring out what was purest in both Islam and Hinduism (Buddhism etc.). What matters here is the search for purity and saintly men, and it is important to see that such competition is not necessarily Hindu-Muslim, but more often between individual saints. The violence to which Muzaffar Alam drew attention was according to Kolff, therefore, not so much illustrative of the rivalry between a consolidated Hinduism and a consolidated Islam (that belongs to the first model), as of the clash between purity, represented by these saints, and power, represented by sultans, rajas and tribal chiefs. The commentator went on to suggest that this opposition of power and purity is a basic characteristic of the second model. Both elements, admittedly, are complementary and together represent a whole. Theologically, in India at least, sufi and bhakti ideas tended for centuries to be at an advantage and dominated the idiom or discourse of the debate, because Indian religion traditionally upheld the individual as an autonomous source of revelation and upheld purity over and against the exercise of power.

The afternoon session was devoted to the comparative impact of the colonial powers, and in particular the question of economic imperialism which, it was felt, had been neglected in previous meetings. In his paper 'British and Dutch Imperialism: a Comparison' Professor Wesseling addressed in particular the problem of timing which meant that the impact of the two metropolises on their colonies was rather different. Whereas Britain clearly did experience an 'Age of Imperialism' in the late nineteenth century, the movement of Dutch

colonial government was towards *mise en valeur*, and, in a sense, the heyday of Dutch 'imperialism' was in the twentieth century.

Starting out with an overall survey of the different kinds of imperialism that figure in modern historiography, the author showed that the Dutch case seemed hard to fit in. The Dutch did not participate in the scramble for Africa – they even sold their last outpost on the Gold Coast, Elmina castle, to the English – and besides they did not engage in any spectacular expansive drive elsewhere. Wesseling drew attention to the important recent study by Dr. M. Kuitenbrouwer who has characterised the 1870-1900 period in the Dutch case as a phase of concentration and stabilisation in Southeast Asia. But while Kuitenbrouwer singled out the protracted Aceh War as the Dutch version of an imperialist war, Wesseling held that Dutch imperialism was really provoked by the imperialism of others: it was not a matter of action but of reaction. Thus the Aceh War should be seen as an affirmative action to frustrate the imperialist ambitions of other European powers. Wesseling did not conceive the Lombok and Aceh campaigns as a major change in Dutch colonial policy. Indeed a real transition only occurred after 1900 when, under the cloak of the so-called ethical policy, a strategy of decisive *mise en valeur* was chosen. In shouldering a more systematic and officially accepted policy of economic exploitation from 1900 onwards the Dutch colonial administration sailed roughly the same course as its British counterpart in India.

Professor H. Baudet and Dr. Lindblad re-emphasised the economic element in both British and Dutch colonialism and considered *inter alia* the value of Professor Hopkins' model of 'gentlemanly capitalism' in the British case (unfortunately Professor Hopkins was unable to attend). As a result this part of the discussion remained rather academic. Dr. C. Bayly drew attention to the importance of an earlier phase of assertive British empire building, from about 1780 to 1830 when many institutions and regions of the former Dutch empire were absorbed into the British'.

In the later afternoon Professors A. Lapian, T. Raychaudhuri and Dharma Kumar considered the attitudes of the colonised towards imperial rule, emphasising the ambiguity and complexity which pervaded these relations. Dr. Lapian did so in his paper 'Indonesian Perceptions of the Colonial Power' by drawing upon eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Indonesian literature. In a masterly improvisation Dr. Raychaudhuri further developed this theme in Indian literature. Prof. Dharma Kumar in her paper 'The Colonial Tradition in India and Indonesia' turned to modern times and wondered how differences between the former colonial regimes actually may have borne some connection with differences that can nowadays be discerned between independent India and Indonesia. Colonial government brought new instruments of rule: modern armies, modern bureaucracies, and in the process it also created new expectations on the part of the Indians and Indonesians towards their respective governments.

Even if the Indians gained greater administrative expertise than the Indonesians because the former, contrary to the latter, were recruited to the

highest level of the colonial bureaucracy, it may be argued that the Anglo-Indian administrative tradition may have slowed down post-independence economic growth due to its bureaucratic arrogance which stands in the way of fruitful collaboration between popular initiative and government.

Finally, Prof. Kumar drew attention to the fact that the Dutch, who were interventionists *par excellence* at the local level as long as they were on the scene, have left little or no lasting effect on Indonesian policy making, while the British, architects of higher level administration, would seem to have exerted a greater impact on the political structure of India. The colonial past is actually often used in Indian political circles as a norm. Appeals to colonial precedents are heard from all quarters.

The Tuesday morning session moved on to an analysis of the micro-economy of colonial India and Indonesia. In her paper 'From Middleman Minorities to Industrial Entrepreneurs: the Chinese in Java and the Parsis in Western India 1619-1939' Dr. Christine Dobbin advanced the notion of the mobilisation of resources through 'subethnicity' networks and argued that this was a common feature of the history of both Parsi and Marwari entrepreneurs in India and Chinese entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia. Professor Thee Kian Wie emphasised the adverse effects of international economic cycles and of the policies of the colonial state on the development of industrialisation in Indonesia.

Dr. Dobbin wondered whether there was a nexus between ethnicity and success in various forms of business activity in British India and the Netherlands Indies. She proceeded to offer three yardsticks to test such a proposition: (a) does the 'ethnic niche' offer opportunities for entrepreneurial activity on the market? (b) do some cultures perhaps predispose their members to the pursuit of entrepreneurial goals? (c) should this entrepreneurial activity perhaps be explained as a reaction to blocked avenues of occupational mobility? For comparative purposes Dr. Dobbin singled out the Parsis of India and the Chinese of Java in her case study. She first analysed in detail the role of Java's Chinese in the batik industry and concluded that the Chinese followed the pattern of penetration and control in Java while the Parsis actually strove for innovation and reconstruction as they established themselves in the cotton textile industry of India.

Turning to the role that the Parsis and the Chinese played in the opium trade, it was clear that while the Parsis focussed on opium export and thus built up their export network, the Chinese were involved in the sale of opium within Java and thus developed and operated a widely spread credit system. Discussing attitudes to capital mobilisation Dr. Dobbin drew attention to the so-called 'sojourning mentality' of the *sinkeh* Chinese who preferred an easily liquidatable livelihood in case he should ever return to China. This attitude of course had its impact on long-term capital formation.

Turning to the issue of cultural predispositions as an entrepreneurial asset,

Dr. Dobbin showed that the Parsis in India proved to be far more responsive to nineteenth-century Western civilisation than were the Chinese in Java.

Summing up, the author concluded that although there were large differences in approach on account of cultural differences such as the relative importance of family networks, the eventual success of both the Parsis or the Chinese in moving into the modern economy depended on securing an 'ethnic niche' and, once this had been secured, on the capacity to mobilise subethnicity networks and maintain ethnic boundaries for specific purposes.

In his paper 'Industrialisation in India and Indonesia', Dr. Thee Kian Wie expressed the concern of Indonesian and Indian scholars and intellectuals about the under-achieving performance of their countries' economies. Post-war industrial growth has been sluggish when compared with other countries in the region. Most researchers would agree that this sluggishness is the result of excessive government protection. Still, in the 1965-1980 period the Indonesian manufacturing output grew fivefold, the Indian only twofold, although the quantities of manufactured exports have remained low. Both the Indonesian and Indian development policies remain inward-looking compared with countries like Japan, Korea and Taiwan, which 'hunt' foreign capital needed for the import of food, fuel and raw materials.

At independence the picture was quite different. India had at its disposal a major manufacturing industry while Indonesia's industry should be characterised as one consisting of cottage activities and modern agricultural processing industries. This raises the question whether the administrative heritage has anything to do with the recent industrial performance of India and Indonesia. World War I and World War II were both periods in which Indian manufacturing experienced boom periods because Western imports were disrupted. Indonesia of course suffered tremendous losses during World War II. As Anne Booth had shown in her contribution to the Delhi Conference, economic policy in India during the financial crisis in the 1930s was characterised by a *laissez-faire* policy while in the Dutch Indies a heavily interventionist policy of import substituting industrialisation was carried out with the help of administrative measures like the Industrial licensing system, the so-called *Bedrijfsreglementeringsordonnantie* (BRO) which aimed at preventing destructive domestic competition. The BRO has survived into the 1980s with very negative effects. During the oil-boom, import substitution once more was stimulated to create, more or less regardless of costs, independently expanding Indonesian industries. Because these native industries grew up independently of each other, they did not mutually reinforce each other. Dr. Thee indeed concluded that the administrative heritage from the colonial period in several respects should be re-adjusted in order to guarantee a healthy economic growth policy freed from over-protective measures.

Following a successful visit to Ely Cathedral and a conference dinner, the final morning of the meeting was devoted to summing up. Professors Om Prakash, Anthony Reid and Jan Breman gave final statements which pointed out once

again the difficulties of inter-cultural comparison. Among the topics mentioned were relative population size, different settlement patterns and patterns of village structure, the relative importance of landborne as opposed to sea-borne trade, and above all the differing degrees of penetration achieved by commercialisation in the two societies. Some members of the conference vigorously challenged the value of comparison at this level, but most agreed that the exercise had had considerable heuristic value, above all in exposing the different assumptions which lay behind the main focusses of study on the two societies. It was generally agreed that a rigid 'area studies' rubric could lead to myopia and to fruitless and ahistorical searches for the 'essential' India or Indonesia. The doyen of the CDLY project, Prof. Sartono Kartodirdjo, summed up the issue well: 'Comparisons which highlight similarities will help to underline the particularities and unique features. Our collective endeavours have achieved just that. Let us end this exercise by quoting Cecil Rhodes: "we have done little and much has still to be done".' These wise words – whether uttered by the imperialist *par excellence* or by an eminent Indonesian historian – were warmly agreed upon.

The Steering Committee meeting in conclave later that morning considered ways and means for drawing together some of the main themes of the four meetings and presenting them to a wider audience.

The Steering Committee would like to thank the Master and Fellows of St. Catherine's College, the Managers of the Smuts Memorial Fund, the British Council and the Van den Bergh van Heemstede and Reael Foundations for the generous logistical and financial support which they provided for this meeting. The participants would also like to express again their appreciation of the efforts of Professors Kumar and Wesseling in masterminding this series and of the opportunity to enjoy social and academic contacts with such a wide range of scholars.

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