Preface

“Culture” and “politics” are Western concepts that have no precise Indonesian analogues. The authors of this book have tried two complementary methods to show what can be learned about Indonesia through use of these Western concepts. Lev, Liddle, and Sartono demonstrate how much can be gained from presenting Indonesian life in Western terms, while Abdullah and Anderson contrast Indonesian and Western ideas.

Daniel Lev and William Liddle, both political scientists, work in sociological traditions. Liddle analyzes the process by which traditionally self-contained village communities are incorporated into a nation-state and shows how this amalgamation stimulates the growth of new ethnically and regionally defined identities. He explores the ways in which these new identities are given political expression, and the “crisis of participation” that confronts the nation’s leadership as a result. He demonstrates how different types of political parties, to be successful at the local level, have to adapt themselves to local socioeconomic and cultural configurations, and he portrays the characteristic pattern of this adaptation. Lev analyzes the rapidly changing role of law in Indonesia since the end of the colonial period. He treats the decline of the Western-style legal profession both in terms of the decay of its necessary economic and political underpinnings and in terms of the persistence and even reinforcement of patrimonial values and local ethnic and religious traditions. At the same time, he shows how powerful forces of secularization and integration, deriving from nationalism and the bureaucratic imperatives of the nation-state, counteract these trends. He shows, too, how under such conditions, some of the most important functions performed by law and legal specialists in

certain Western societies have come to be performed by very different institutions and groups in contemporary Indonesia.

Sartono Kartodirdjo, a historian, continuing his work published as *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten of 1888*, gives us an overview of Javanese peasant movements. He uses a category, millenarianism, which first gained prominence among social scientists when it was used to describe certain medieval European social movements. The picture he draws is of continuous and varied movements, revealing a history of the peasantry that previous scholars have largely missed. We are given an impression of peasants who act in terms they themselves generate and who make their own history rather than merely reacting to the pressures of colonialism.

Benedict Anderson, a political scientist, raises a question that comes out of Western political theory—he asks what the Javanese notion of power is. The meaning of power and its place within society are so different from what they are in the West, that one could conclude that the Javanese have another notion altogether. Anderson's method is very suggestive. Although the initial question comes out of Western political theory, he proceeds not by the application of Western ideas, but by making contrasts with them. His is the most purely cultural essay in the book; part of its value may be to demonstrate one method of cultural explication.

Taufik Abdullah as a historian believes that the narration of past events can reveal the ideas which rule people's lives. He writes about the leader of a conservative movement in Minangkabau (West Sumatra). In doing so he is aware that the Indonesian word for culture does not contain the notion of tradition. For Abdullah, Minangkabau development from the past does not come from the social products of the past as they are reformed in the present. Rather, it results from the dialectic of men and governing ideas of society. These ideas have a timeless logic which expresses itself differently in different circumstances.

The essays in this book are of more than regional significance. For instance, Liddle's description of the formation of new group identities among the Batak may be applicable to other parts of the world, and Lev's study will certainly be of interest to those concerned with the development of law anywhere in the world. Moreover, Sartono's and Abdullah's essays indicate another sort of relevance of regional

studies for Indonesia. These two historians are themselves full members of Indonesian metropolitan culture, yet they write about their regions with no sense of discontinuity. Not only do they find sources of cultural continuity in movements that have failed by conventional standards, they also write with little indication that they feel themselves distant from the cultures they examine. There is nothing in tone or perspective which betrays estrangement from regional traditions. This suggests a source of continuity in metropolitan cultural life which deserves further study.

In his afterword Clifford Geertz discusses the contrast between Indonesian political institutions and power relationships and the cultural frameworks in which they exist. It was he who initiated the study of culture and politics in Indonesia. Moreover, his writings on Indonesia have been an indispensable background for any scholar concerned with the nation. His reflections on the questions raised by these essays are therefore especially pertinent.

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