

# **The Image of the Incarnation as Motif for Development Practice in West Java, Indonesia**

Lyndell Dean Backues

Submitted in accordance with the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds  
The Department of Theology and Religious Studies and  
the School of Geography

August 2003

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit  
has been given where reference has been made to the work of others

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that  
no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgments

## Acknowledgements

In a work which extends over a period of several years there are far too many people to thank. That notwithstanding, I shall give it my best effort, begging forgiveness and understanding from anyone I may inadvertently leave out.

First, heartfelt gratitude is due my supervisors, Professor Haddon Willmer from the Department of Theology and Dr David Preston from Geography. Each took a risk with my proposal—interdisciplinary in nature as it was—and cleared the way for me to enter into a split-programme arrangement at a time when such a configuration was quite new. Thus, I was able to do a good deal of my work from my home in Indonesia itself, assisted by e-mail which (sometimes) paved the way. Though I am sure I tried the patience of each of these gentlemen at times, they consistently responded with encouragement and a willingness to read whatever I sent their way. I found their feedback, critique and input invaluable and for that I am most grateful.

The staff in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Leeds always seemed to go the extra mile any time I was in need of assistance—whether in Leeds or while I was away. Special note must be made of Jill Killington, who stayed on top of the status of my very confusing project even at times when I myself was confused as to where I stood.

Over the course of two stints of on-site residence in Leeds itself, I had the pleasure of making many dear friends. Ian and Jenny Brocklebank (who have now joined us here in Tasikmalaya), David and Penny Brighton (who were a life-line to us in 2003), David and Ruth Hanson, Simon and Grace Smith, Alan and Karen Flood and

## **Abstract**

Beginning with the proposition that the incarnation is not simply theologically descriptive but also strategically prescriptive, this thesis proposes utilising this motif in order to analyse and critique participatory development practice as it is undertaken today, both by Christians as well as those who are not. After first illustrating the value of incarnational involvement by presenting the results of field research undertaken amongst a particular community of the Sundanese people residing in a specific hamlet in the city of Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia, a template comprised of six distinguishing marks and three overarching characteristics is then developed in order to appraise the Incarnational motif in terms of its tangible applicability. Thereafter, four disciplines are examined and appraised in terms of their incarnational, participatory value—the discipline of development studies (focussing on the work of Robert Chambers), the discipline of anthropology (focussing on the work of Clifford Geertz), the logic of Critical Theory (focussing on the work of Jürgen Habermas) and the thought of a leading Indonesian Islamic theorist, Abdurrahman Wahid. Key, buttressing points in each of these are selected as sources of validation for the incarnational motif. Furthermore, the image of participation found in each is critiqued by comparing them to the six distinguishing marks and the three overarching characteristics. Finally, a tangible example of incarnational participation previously undertaken in West Java, Indonesia by the author is offered as a picture of how the incarnational thesis might be utilised in social practice. Both the complexities encountered as well as promises experienced are highlighted so as to present a realistic and useful model.



## Table of Contents

1.	<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
2.	<b>Karang Resik–Marginalised, Undefeated and Unsatisfied</b> .....	7
	<i>The Geographical Breakdown</i> .....	10
	<i>The Historical Breakdown</i> .....	13
	<i>Shifts in Kampung Patronage and Power</i> .....	25
	<i>The Countervailing Symbolic Universe of Marginalised Residents in Karang Resik</i> .....	54
3.	<b>The Incarnation as Motif</b> .....	90
	<i>A Theological Substantiation of the Christian Concept of ‘Incarnation’ as a Primary Motif in Christianity</i> .....	91
	<i>The Six Marks of the Incarnational Motif</i> .....	96
	<i>Three Overarching Characteristics</i> .....	118
4.	<b>Appraising the Incarnational Motif</b> .....	135
	<i>An Examination of the Notion of Incarnational Participation in Relation to Development Practice–Robert Chambers and Participatory Rural Appraisal</i> .....	140
	<i>An Examination of the Notion of Incarnational Participation in Relation to Anthropology–the Methods of Clifford Geertz</i> .....	160
	<i>An Examination of the Notion of Incarnational Participation in Relation to Political Theory–the Philosophy of Jürgen Habermas</i> .....	170
	<i>An Examination of the Notion of Incarnational Participation in Relation to Indonesian Islamic Theory–the Democratic Polity of Abdurrahman Wahid</i> .....	188
	<i>Summary of the Appraisal</i> .....	215



5.	<b>Applying the Incarnational Motif—A Case Study and Its Implications</b> . .	224
	<i>Corroborations of the Incarnational Model</i> . . . . .	226
	<i>Effects of the Incarnational Approach Upon Persons in Karang Resik</i> . . . . .	239
	<i>Complications and Complexities for the Incarnational Model</i> . . . . .	243
	<i>Changes Wrought in Me by Incarnational Experience in Karang Resik</i> . . . . .	252
	<i>A Reappraisal of the Incarnational Approach</i> . . . . .	254
	<i>Conclusion</i> . . . . .	269
6.	<b>Bibliography</b> . . . . .	273

## List of Tables and Figures

<b>Map of West Java, Karang Resik and Tasikmalaya</b> .....	10
<b>Contrasting Images of Power</b> .....	28
<b>Traditional <i>Kampung</i> Patronage</b> .....	31
<b>Reconfigured <i>Kampung</i> Patronage</b> .....	49
<b>Simplex and Multiplex Relationships</b> .....	167

## Chapter One

### Introduction

...[Buddhist] countries invariably assume that they can model their economic development plans in accordance with modern economics, and they call upon modern economists from so-called advanced countries to advise them, to formulate the policies pursued, and to construct the grand design for development, the Five-Year Plan or whatever it may be called. No-one seems to think that a Buddhist way of life would call for Buddhist economics, just as the modern materialist way of life has brought forth modern economics (Schumacher 1993:38).

Christian ethics does not begin by emphasizing rules or principles, but by calling our attention to a narrative that tells God's dealing with creation. To be sure, it is a complex story with many different subplots and digressions, but it is crucial for us at this point...to see that it is not accidentally narrative (Hauerwas 1983:24).

At first blush, juxtaposing the general field of development studies alongside the specifically Christian theological concept of incarnation might appear a conflation of categories. What could these two domains possibly have to say to each other; what truck does chalk have with cheese?

I believe that there are at least two reasons why this question presents itself.

Firstly, the notion of the incarnation is customarily conceptualised at its root as a theologically descriptive notion. Many persons—Christian theologians included—are at a loss as to the import the incarnation might possess as an image of inspiration and motivation for how we go about living our lives, much less how we might pursue our vocations. Schumacher makes the claim above that 'no-one seems to think that a Buddhist way of life would call for Buddhist economics, just as the modern materialist way of life has brought forth modern economics'. I believe the same to be largely true for Christians—they rarely stop to ask, for instance, what a truly Christian manner of enacting development interventions might be. But this is



precisely the question that I plan to ask here. And since 'Christian ethics does not begin by emphasizing rules or principles, but by calling our attention to a narrative that tells God's dealing with creation' (see Hauerwas above), it seems to follow that a truly Christian manner of enacting development interventions will by necessity entail focussing upon the principal image we have of God's dealing with creation—that embodied in the picture of Jesus. A primary aim of this thesis is to challenge the normal manner in which the incarnation has been framed, opening it up for more application based upon the biblical picture of the life of Christ. Theology is not simply a packet of concepts about God; instead, it is a process which asks us how we are to go about living our lives in light of a God who lives.

The second reason the above question might arise is due to how the practice of development participation has been envisioned. More often than not, it has been framed as simply a box of interventions possessing little moral load, necessitating only that the practitioner master their vagaries and exhibit fidelity to their strictures. This is why a Buddhist, a secularist, a Muslim or a Christian would not be expected to carry out development work in any sort of unique fashion. It is thought that there is only one way to do development, since the process is based upon self-affirming, self-evident axioms which all would agree with.

The nature of each of these disciplines, theology and economic development (inclusive of the latter's parent discipline, the field of economics proper), has been questioned recently. What exactly do persons in these disciplines do as they seek answers to questions cast as falling within each of their respective domains? Traditionally, they have been pictured as 'answering' these questions, confidently and with little wavering, since this is what settled scientific enquiry has been charged

to do. But since the Enlightenment-funded pillars of positivist science and empirical rationalism have come under extensive scrutiny recently, there is now much less certainty that knowledge is obtained in such an instrumentalist fashion.

Rationality has to be expanded. One way of expanding it is to recognize that language cannot be absolutely accurate, that it is impossible finally to 'define' either scientific laws or theological truths. To speak with Gregory Bateson, neither science nor theology 'proves'; rather they 'probe'. This recognition has led to a reevaluation of the role of metaphor, myth, analogy, and the like, and to the rediscovery of the sense of mystery and enchantment (Bosch 1991:352).

The personal has thus reasserted itself as a valid category in the sub-discipline of philosophy known as epistemology (cf. Polanyi 1958). This has opened the way for personal engagement. Suddenly, the juxtapositioning of the Christian image of the incarnation (as steeped with considerations of personhood as it by necessity must be) against the backdrop of proper ways to engage in development practice and participation no longer seems so strange.

Indeed, the question is anything but strange—I believe the motif of the incarnation provides an excellent guide against which participatory development practice can be appraised. In fact, although the concept is admittedly funded by certain preconceptions concerning the nature of the religious and the theological, the use of such a model for gauging effectiveness in participatory development practice does not by necessity assume a specific religious position. By fashioning a template of what I will designate the six marks of the incarnational motif in relation to participatory involvement, the would-be practitioner will be poised to utilise these in order to assess the authenticity of other development participation models encountered.



The topic before us concerns participation in given communities of privation and need. Before going any further it is surely necessary to place before us a suitable definition of the concept of participation. Of course, after delimiting the six marks of the incarnational motif below, we should be in possession of a rather robust picture of participatory practice which could render any working definition we adopt now obsolete. All the same, since the concept of participation is frequently heralded by such differing parties and constituencies, there is always the danger that those pondering the notion may be speaking of quite divergent concepts from the onset. Thus, I would like to offer the following from sociologist Peter Berger as a worthy description of the notion:

Development is not something to be decided by experts, simply because there are no experts on the desirable goals of human life. Development is the desirable course to be taken by human beings in a particular situation. As far as possible, therefore, they ought to participate in the fundamental choices to be made, choices that hinge not on technical expertise but on moral judgements....To call for participation is to render 'cognitive respect' to all those who cannot claim the status of experts....such 'cognitive respect' is not an arbitrary or even eccentric ideological decision. It is based on the understanding that every human being is *in possession* of a world of his own, and that nobody can interpret this world better (or more 'expertly') than he can himself (1974:76, emphasis in the original).

There is a deprofessionalisation implicit in this definition, one based squarely upon the fact that everyone possesses life experience. This will be an important consideration as we unpack the image of the incarnation as motif for development practice below. Since knowledge is attained less by way of 'proving' and more by way of 'probing' (as we heard Gregory Bateson say above), this probing implies that we learn by living life. Thus, everyone is at some level a researcher in this



endeavour known as life. All data in the possession of local persons must be brought to the table so as to gain a clearer picture of what is before us.

There is also an emphasis in the above definition upon the local and the contextual. There is no overarching, grand design as to what human life should become in detail. Local persons (the 'non-experts') must be given a voice to articulate their preferences in community. And, that community must be in a given place, at a given time and involve given people. The notion of the incarnation, centred as it is in the image of a single human being, takes this notion of the local and contextual very seriously.

Furthermore, Berger comments that the principal decisions in life are not determined by technical considerations but by moral ones. This implicitly carves out a place for religious discourse in all participatory fora, since at its base religion is concerned with moral decisions and ethical discourse.

Finally, this definition stresses that postures of respect toward all involved in the local context is a must if we are to claim that participation is taking place. Amongst other things, this touches once again on the place of religious discourse since the vast majority of the world's poor are quite a religious lot. If we take seriously the charge to accord them respect, we will need to permit them to speak and deliberate on their own terms. Inevitably, these will be religious ones, the likes of which, of course, fit well within the backdrop of an examination of the incarnation.

\*\*\*

Since this thesis is centred upon a particular hamlet found in the city of Tasikmalaya in West Java, Indonesia, the focus of this study is quite specific: Since

the biblical concept of the incarnation constitutes a metaphor which calls forth a specific sort of activity in the world, it can serve as a sufficiently sensitive and relatively effective motif for evaluating participatory development practice in communities of marginalised people in tradition-based communities such as Karang Resik, West Java.

In Chapter Two, I will undertake a fairly extensive examination of the hamlet under question here: Karang Resik. This community exhibits a peculiar history, one which ironically mirrors many of the tensions and conflicts which have beset the country of Indonesia over the last forty years or so.

In Chapter Three I will attempt a delineation of the six marks of the incarnational motif, examining each one in reference to its potential as a template for development practice.

In Chapter Four I will examine four representative disciplines which have traditionally espoused notions of participation. The analysis of each of these will be compared and contrasted with the incarnational motif developed in the previous chapter, with commonalities highlighted and differences underscored in the process.

And finally, in Chapter Five, I will take a closer look at my own involvement in Karang Resik, testing the incarnational motif in relation to my own experience, the experience of residents there and in terms of the impact achieved there. And in concluding the study, many strands of thought will be drawn together so as to come to an overall conclusion as to merit of such an approach. I believe that it can bear the weight of serving as a model for development participation, especially when we take into consideration the relational and personal nature of the task at hand.

## Chapter Two

### Karang Resik—Marginalised, Undefeated and Unsatisfied

...Marginalisation...can be defined as the process by which power relations between people change in such a way that one category of people is increasingly cut off from access to vital resources (land and water, capital, employment, education, political rights and so on), which become more and more monopolised by a small elite....Marginalisation is not merely a matter of relative loss of access to economic resources. Field studies show that loss of status, self-esteem and self-confidence are experienced as an inseparable aspect of life at society's margins. In some cases this outweighs the loss of economic security... (Grijns, Smyth and van Velzen 1994:12).

This chapter examines a marginalised people in a particular Indonesian tradition-based community known as Karang Resik. What will be explored are these persons' internal struggles as well as the increasing number of external pressures they have had to face—ones regional, national and even international in nature. In addition to this, we will also consider some of the ways in which they have coped with and resisted these pressures.

Karang Resik is a small hamlet bordering the northeastern edge of a city known as Tasikmalaya, which itself lies toward the eastern portion of the Indonesian province of West Java.<sup>1</sup> While it is always possible that much of that below could be extrapolated to wider regions of West Java (or even to Indonesia as a whole), making broad, categorical generalisations about the entirety of the province or the country is not my aim here. Instead, what I am attempting to do is to shove particulars forward in stark relief, thereby obtaining a sample case with which we might measure and gauge power relations in the region. This should poise us in later

---

<sup>1</sup>For maps of the region, see page 10.



chapters to appraise the effectiveness of participatory development methodologies in relation to the area.

We will encounter tensions and seeming incongruities in the picture below. While it is true that poor, marginalised residents of Karang Resik have been ill-treated, it also remains a fact that they have not been defeated. And while they are far more capable than those of us on the outside take them to be, they *are* still weak. They cannot achieve their own aspirations by themselves (a point we will return to in Chapter Five). It is precisely the tautness present between these poles which is most interesting in the survey. Life has been difficult for these marginalised residents, yet they have resisted with admirable nonconformity. And while they have been without an overt power base of their own in the community, they have not been entirely powerless. Much of what they have done in response to the disparity of power has been tucked away out of sight and thus it has often been overlooked. In part, that is by design.

As is common to all places, there have always been internal power disparities in the region, ones which have disadvantaged particular residents. Being a tradition-based society, foremost amongst these inequalities have been alliances of patronage which have served to hierarchically arrange all persons in the community in terms of social placement and status. We shall see that this has not always been to the complete disadvantage of the client in the couplet—if shrewdly manipulated, clients often possess ways and means with which they can exert influence and better their situation in the face of superiors. One of the reasons for this is due to the fact that the power struggle is local and thus, in order to maintain their position, patrons feel the need to sustain local prestige and honour. In times gone by, it was this need for

prestige and honour which poorer residents were now and again able to exploit to their advantage.

But, the traditional patron-client construct has recently undergone a dramatic change. Over three decades there have appeared on the horizon symbols of Indonesian nation-building which have greatly strengthened the influence both local as well as distant elite actors have had over the lives of the area's poor. This sort of power has been decoupled from the local community. As a result, former clients have been left marginalised, shunted to the side, ignored—or worst of all—used as tools. They have been told who they must be and what their world must entail. Much of this has been the by-product of the 'development' rhetoric adopted by former-Indonesian president Soeharto and his regime.

Poor residents have not eagerly embraced these images, nor, once again, have they received them passively. Due to their weakness in terms of public power, Karang Resik's marginalised have generally been forced to resist in a decidedly furtive manner. We will notice significant resilience and shrewdness on the part of these 'powerless' persons, a resilience very similar to that described by James Scott in his 'Weapons of the Weak' analysis. As Scott has pointed out, resistance on the part of poor, tradition-based village residents—faced with opposition considerably more powerful than they happen to be—is almost always off-the-record, *Janus-faced* and open to multiple interpretations (see Scott 1985 and 1990).<sup>2</sup> As we will see, this is the genius of their defence.

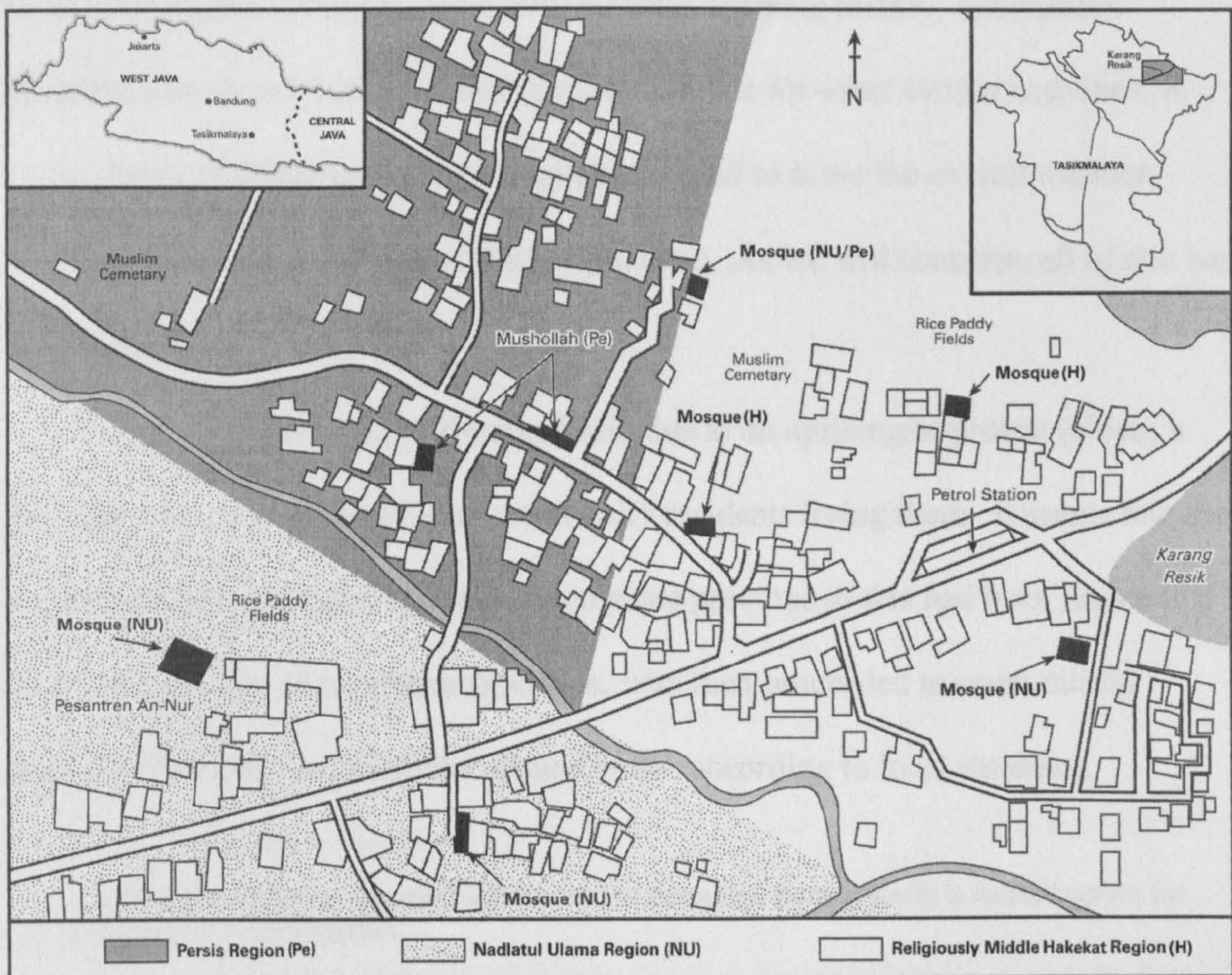
---

<sup>2</sup>For a slightly more detailed description of Scott's 'Weapons of the Weak' thesis, see page 153.



But in the end, Karang Resik's residents are still not satisfied with their situation; they would like for it to change. Furthermore, the virtual symbolic barrage they have been under over the past thirty to forty years has indeed affected them. They have been beaten down and they have been humiliated, even though they have resisted and are still resisting. They have been rendered disadvantaged as a by-product of the context in which they have found themselves. It is this context which I would like to examine.

### *The Geographical Breakdown*



**Map of West Java, Karang Resik and Tasikmalaya**



As has already been mentioned, the site of this research is popularly known as Karang Resik (though several official regions and municipal borders are covered by what the area takes in).<sup>3</sup> As part of the city of Tasikmalaya in the province of West Java, this region has actually played quite a significant role in the historical development of the municipality. Previously the site of one of the largest and most successful independence battles against Dutch troops ever to have taken place in the city,<sup>4</sup> in the early sixties a large recreation site was commemoratively constructed on the same location.<sup>5</sup> On our map, this establishment appears in the lower-mid portion of the right hand side. Until just a few years ago, this site—to this day owned by the local government—served as, *inter alia*, a public camping facility, a recreation grounds, a local civil-service training spot and a site for other similar activities; in short, it was available in whatever capacity seemed to serve the overall outdoor recreational needs of the surrounding population. As we will soon see, all of this has now changed.

I was first attracted to Karang Resik due to an uprising of protest (albeit, a peaceful one) on the part of local community residents living there. It seems that the recreation area referred to above just two years previous to this had been leased to a local businessman of considerable means, who then proceeded to cosmetically manicure the lawn, refurbish the grounds (and, according to local residents,

---

<sup>3</sup>In terms of Indonesian civil-administrative hierarchy, Karang Resik is located within the *kelurahan* known as Sukamanah.

<sup>4</sup>This occurred in the late forties—we will take a look at the event below

<sup>5</sup>In actual fact, the area where the recreation spot is found is the only place ever to actually bear the name Karang Resik officially. Nevertheless, popular reference throughout the city of Tasikmalaya has for some time pointed to the whole stretch depicted on the map as rightfully deserving this appellation—a sort of reverse metonymy with the region taking its name from the recreation spot.

significantly alter them), station guards at the front and thereafter charge admission.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, he apparently opened a pub inside the confines of the site in the evenings which local residents took to be a discotheque. These residents viewed these actions as a potential catalyst for late-night carousing, drunkenness and—according to them—unavoidably serving to bring prostitution into their area.<sup>7</sup>

However, being provisionally resolved, the outcries quickly subsided.<sup>8</sup> With this as the catalyst, I found the region brooked a very interesting historical complexion—one mirroring much of the socio-political history of West Java itself (and perhaps even the whole of the island of Java). Thus I chose to focus upon the region as my portal into the analysis of development practice and participation in West Java.

For local residents, the region has long been cognitively segregated into three divisions.<sup>9</sup> Two of the segments align with long-standing socio-religious groupings found at the national level in Indonesia; to wit, those loyal to the Islamic organisation Nahdatul Ulama or NU and those with allegiance to Persatuan Islam

---

<sup>6</sup>In fact, the old gate entrance to the grounds of Karang Resik, still present with the emblem of the national boy scouts (*pramuka*) carved on it, has now been shunted off to the side—by being bricked off from the site and no longer leading anywhere but toward a large iron gate which effectively stops the traditional entrance way. One can turn right and progress up the steps toward the nearby kampung—located tellingly away from the historical site of Karang Resik!

<sup>7</sup>Rumours of this sort—whether true or not—were bound to cause unrest since, as shown on the map, within the confines of the Karang Resik region there is located a *pesantren*—a local Islamic theological school—positioned toward the southwest segment of the region.

<sup>8</sup>But it sure to recur since the government simply shifted the lease of the place to an outside Islamic leader (one willing to co-operate in spite of complaints!) and now that the unrest has died down, word has it that control of the site has once again been shifted back to the local wealthy businessman.

<sup>9</sup>Before 1989 these regions were not administrative or official divisions—they were simply the way in which local residents themselves cognitively and historically segmented the area. See page 55 below for an elaboration on the division.



(often known as Persis). The lower region (the NU area) and the upper region (the Persis region, which I have abbreviated as 'Pe') both pride themselves on being more strictly Islamic when contrasted with the third, the vast majority of whose residents admit beliefs more folk Islamic in persuasion.<sup>10</sup> In Karang Resik, these three areas are fairly strictly divided by residents into the regions shown, with the exception that the two more 'scriptural' groupings seem more able to encroach upon land occupied by the third.<sup>11</sup> The reason for this, I believe, is found in the discrepancy evident when comparing social and political power available to the two more 'purely' Islamic groups in contrast to the Religiously Middle (or Hakekat) Region. Behind this discrepancy in power—one decisively rooted in the history of the area—hangs our story.

### *The Historical Breakdown*

As has been mentioned, during the struggle for liberation with the Dutch the present-day Karang Resik site served as the venue for a battle between Indonesian guerilla 'freedom fighters' and a Dutch battalion (a statue on the grounds commemorating this battle can be found there today.) After a three-day preparation, in which trenches were dug and community support organised, the only bridge into the region was destroyed by the freedom fighters, thereby preventing entrance into

---

<sup>10</sup>Although it must be realised that a key point of disagreement between NU and Persis is the conviction on the part of the latter that what is needed is a more pure Islam (read: a more purely Qur'anic and *Hadith*-oriented Islam) than that embraced by NU advocates. NU can (and generally is) characterised as embracing a more traditionalist, folk variety of Islam, whereas Persis might best be classified as 'fundamentalist.' For mention of Persatuan Islam and their historical relationship to a more fundamentalist position, see Samson 1978:215. We will also consider this difference in Chapter Four.

<sup>11</sup>As can be seen by the NU mosque located near the Karang Resik recreation spot—clearly well within the Hakekat region.

the city on the part of Dutch forces. Foreign troops suffered many casualties in the short span of a two-hour campaign, whereas Indonesian guerillas and the surrounding residents are said not to have suffered even a single loss. As a result, the Karang Resik region became recognised both locally and regionally as a site symbolising victory in the struggle for independence on the part of precursors to the Indonesian armed forces (the Tentara Nasional Indonesia, which later developed into Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia or ‘The Republic of Indonesia Armed Forces’; generally abbreviated ABRI.)<sup>12</sup>

Historically, everyone I met in Karang Resik conceded that those securing the victory on that fateful day were the ancestors—the grandfathers, the fathers, the uncles, the older brothers—of persons now associated with Middle Region or the Hakekat area.<sup>13</sup> Toward the end of the conflict with the Dutch (which came to a close in 1949; cf. Schwarz 1994:5), a more intractable religious faction of the Indonesian freedom fighters known as Dar’ul Islam, or DI, arose locally as well as on the national scene. Their chief objective was the establishment of an Indonesian Islamic state (Negara Islam Indonesia, often abbreviated NII).<sup>14</sup> At first DI joined

---

<sup>12</sup>This hints at the details of the birth of ABRI. As Sundhaussen (1978) points out, its establishment was not the result of a mandate issued by a centralised, governmental authority but instead it ‘...literally sprang up locally in 1945 in response to the threat of Dutch reoccupation of the archipelago’ (:59).

It is interesting to note that, after the rise of Soeharto but before his fall from power (described below), the Indonesian national military was without exception known as ABRI—during this time TNI was a (somewhat disparaging) designation reserved for military troops during the Soekarno years. However, since the end of Soeharto’s reign, the designation TNI has been widely resurrected, seemingly to put distance between the military of Soeharto’s day and that in evidence today.

<sup>13</sup>For reasons explained below, the designations Middle Region and Hakekat region will be used interchangeably.

<sup>14</sup>Translated from Arabic, Dar’ul Islam is usually glossed ‘House of Islam’. For an examination of the manner in which DI rose out of the ranks of the nationalist freedom fighters, see  
(continued...)



forces with the nationalists (especially during the struggle against the Dutch) but over time they became more and more disgruntled with the Soekarno-inspired solution to national pluralism and societal heterogeneity, i.e., a secular state guaranteeing freedom of religion to all (this being based upon the Indonesian state creed *pancasila* or 'the Five Principles').<sup>15</sup> Thus, primarily centred in a West Java mountain range approximately ten kilometres west of Tasikmalaya known as Galunggung, DI established a guerrilla resistance group comprised mostly of Sundanese soldiers and sympathisers indigenous to the surrounding area (although the leader, Kartosoewirjo, was Javanese [see Jackson 1980:23].)<sup>16</sup> According to Pak Dodi (a former TNI soldier now living in the Hakekat region),<sup>17</sup>

the chief prey of DI were in the end their very own people: their own countrymen, those from their own ethnic group, people of their own religion or even their own family members—anyone loyal to the Indonesian national cause. As a result, their principal nemesis became none other than TNI who, it should be remembered, sided with the unified government of the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>(...continued)  
Jackson 1980:5, 10-11.

<sup>15</sup>For a look at the elements of *pancasila*, see Sukarno 1969. We will later examine this construct as a symbol of societal engineering by the Indonesian central government.

<sup>16</sup>The confines of Tasikmalaya proper actually served as a *de facto* 'city of refuge' for many from outer lying regions fleeing threats of persecution issued by Dar'ul Islam; cf. Hugo *et al.* 1987:100. It seems that Karang Resik's location on the edge of the city and the regency and consequently but a few kilometres from the next major city Ciamis prevented it functioning as a region of similar refuge.

<sup>17</sup>Pak Dodi was actually one of the local militia who participated in the TNI-Dutch battle at the Karang Resik site. It was from him that I gained a great deal of valuable information concerning both the activities of TNI as well as the confrontation with DI in the Karang Resik area.

<sup>18</sup>'*Musuh utama DI adalah saudara mereka sendiri, saudara sebangsa dan setanah air, saudara sesuku, saudara seagama bahkan saudara sekandung yaitu orang-orang nasionalisme, dan musuh pertamanya adalah TNI yang notabene pihak pemerintah negara kesatuan republik Indonesia.*'

Unless noted otherwise, all unmarked quotations are taken from my field notes.

DI loyalists were known to be quite separatist and ruthless. Middle Region residents with whom I have become acquainted relate vivid accounts of losing uncles, aunts and other family members to DI's vengeance, often visited upon victims by way of stealth attacks in the middle of the night.

As the Dar'ul Islam disintegrated its ferocity increased, and its terror became dysfunctional as it became more indiscriminate. Rather than using terror against selected enemies and thereby encouraging affiliation with the movement as a means to survival, the Dar'ul Islam increasingly attacked whole villages....In 1961 Kartosoewirjo had a vision that the road to the Islamic state would be covered by mounds of corpses. This led to the *Perintah Perang Semesta* (the Order of Total War) or *Perintah Perang tanpa Kembali* (the Order for War from Which There Is No Return) issued on June 11, 1961. With the exhortation to total war, Dar'ul Islam operatives were authorized to kill all men, women, and children who did not actively assist the Islamic bands....As a direct result, the ferocity of individual Dar'ul Islam attacks increased even as their total number declined (Jackson 1980:17).

The result was a very uncivil civil war. One result was that many Middle Region folk co-operated with the nascent military in the fifties in order that DI sympathisers could be identified and captured. Additionally, elderly Karang Resik residents relate many experiences of being approached by DI members seeking contributions in kind or currency. If turned away, they say, houses would thereafter be burnt and quite often lives taken—once again, all by means of a visit in the middle of the night. Many persons stated that they went years in the fifties without sleeping in their homes for fear of attack—often lying outside the house at the ready, on guard for any sign of a possible assault.

Thus, the area experienced much bloodshed and a great deal of animosity was sown between warring factions of Karang Resik at the time. Those presently from the Hakekat area, however, relate that, ironically, this also was a time of



increased consolidation and co-operation on the part of their forbears. Antlöv's words concerning nearby Majalaya seems to accurately recap the atmosphere which also held sway for many Middle Region residents of the time.

During the day-time the [*Dar 'ul Islam*] rebels rested, and at night raided villages, for food and other necessities. In many rural areas people could not sleep in their houses at night. Some areas were almost depopulated, with people moving to the cities. Leaders provided camps and arranged night guards. Whole populations were mobilized to protect the village from rebels (Jackson 1980:76).

However, inter-animosity between the pro- and anti-DI factions in Karang Resik as a whole continued unabated and, in fact, quite a few incidents seemed to do nothing but fan the flames of hostility. Two representative vignettes from the area help to illustrate the climate of disdain which fed resentments still palpable to the present day—events which greatly multiplied tension between the two Karang Resik populations.<sup>19</sup>

#### *The Case of Pak Ru'in*

The figure in this account was known as Ru'in. He was a patron for quite a number of people in the Karang Resik region and, additionally, he had the responsibility of collecting DI funds obtained by way of communal contributions or pillage. After occupying this position for quite some time—and thus realising how much wealth was being amassed in this manner—Ru'in, who many in the area feared since it was believed that he possessed considerable supernatural powers, clandestinely refused to deposit the money or surrender it to his overseer.

It is not that he was unaware of the risk latent in this; he knew well the nature of his superiors, persons second to none in cruelty. In fact, Ru'in had great respect for their expertise in the art of torture, an

---

<sup>19</sup>Details in both of these cases—which were obtained by means of interviews with Pak Dodi—were collected by my research assistant, Pak Tampan, who geographically resides in the NU area but whose sympathies lie with Middle Region residents. The events described here, however, were corroborated by other local residents in the Karang Resik area.



ability very much on par with his own. Nevertheless, goaded on by his own lust for material gain, he manipulated the situation and eventually fled with all of the funds in his possession. Several DI soldiers were thereafter given the task of hunting down and capturing him, dead or alive.

For quite some time Ru'in was able to avoid discovery, notwithstanding the DI troops' constant search high and low, eager for any information concerning his whereabouts. Of course, one of the greatest dilemmas Ru'in then faced was not only that he was actively being pursued by former allies but, in his present condition, he would often enough meet up face-to-face with his archenemy; those aligned with TNI.

After pursuing Ru'in for quite some time with little noticeable success, DI personnel got word that one of his sons, a Pak Surdi, often brought food to the banks of River Citanduy—to a spot known as Pelang approximately a kilometre and a half east of Karang Resik. This aroused their suspicion and, upon further investigation, it was soon discovered that this place (where the food was being delivered) was in fact Ru'in's hiding place. Not long afterwards DI launched a fierce attack resulting in a free-for-all and, in the end, Ru'in was shot and captured by those he formerly commanded.

Ru'in was executed there on the spot, decapitated, with his head being thrown into the river—since his former subordinates were convinced he possessed such menacing supernatural powers that he would come back to life if they did not take such drastic measures.

The death of Ru'in aroused a whole host of differing opinions—both pro and con as there always will be. Ru'in's family and those most sympathetic to him were convinced he was assaulted by residents from the central [Religiously Central (Hakekat)] region, in other words, by the supporters of TNI. It is easy to see how they might have arrived at such a conclusion since the one first discovering Ru'in's body was indeed a resident of that area. This incident, of course, has only served to aggravate the extreme animosity already felt by residents with ancestors from both the central region as well as the southern regions. And of course most of the current residents now living there no longer know that this occurrence is part of what caused resentment to form in the first place.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup>*Sang tokoh bernama Ru'in, dia membawahi beberapa orang anak buah dan ditugasi mengumpulkan dana hasil dari sumbangan para simpatisannya ataupun dari hasil rampokannya. Setelah bertugas sekian lama dan melihat harta-benda yang terkumpul demikian banyak mulailah 'akal bulus' mengalir dalam darahnya maka secara diam-diam Ru'in yang dikenal sakti dan ditakuti*  
(continued...)

### *The Case of Pak Soma*

The incident above is very similar to that also experienced by Pak Soma, alias Onon—the primary difference being that Onon was just an average member of DI at the time, one who resided in the northern portion of the Gunung Tanjung region—that now designated Persis territory.

Pak Soma was kidnapped by TNI one day as he was headed to Friday prayers near Gunung Kadu, a region located on the border between the central [Hakekat] and the northern [Pe] portions of Karang Resik. The first to threaten Pak Soma was a man named Pak Sa'in—a resident of the central [Hakekat] region who had earlier played a very important role in TNI. Consequently, this incident served to intensify the bitterness existing between many of Karang Resik's residents. In the end, Pak Soma was carted off to the military base at Wanasigra and to this day he has never returned. Similar to that brought about by the death of Pak Ru'in, the killing of Pak Soma also greatly sharpened the discord dividing local residents. For the second time

---

<sup>20</sup>(...continued)

*itu tidak menyertakan harta benda maupun uang itu pada atasannya.*

*'Ru'in bukan tak tahu resiko atau tak kenal medan. Dia sangat mengenal karakteristik para atasannya yang tak kalah bengis dan kejam bahkan ilmu ke daniyanya pun tak kalah hebatnya dibanding dengan dirinya. Namun karena tergiur oleh materi dia tetap melakukan manipulasi bahkan membawa lari semua harta benda yang terkumpul itu. Maka tak ayal lagi beberapa orang prajurit DI ditugasi untuk memburu dan menangkap Ru'in hidup atau mati.*

*'Selama beberapa waktu, Ru'in lari dan bersembunyi tanpa diketahui, namun para prajurit DI itu terus berupaya mencari beberapa informasi dimana Ru'in bersembunyi dan mengasingkan diri. Tentu saja kondisi demikian membuat Ru'in kebingungan bagai makan buah si malakama karena selain diburu oleh bekas anak buah dan atasannya dia juga harus berhadapan dengan musuh utamanya yaitu TNI.*

*'Setelah dilakukan pengejaran sekian lama tanpa membuahkan hasil, terdengar kabar bahwa Pak Surdi salah seorang anak kandung Ru'in diketahui sering membawa makanan ke suatu tempat di pinggir sungai Citandui kurang-lebih satu setengah kilometer sebelah timur Karang Resik. Yang bernama Pelang hal ini tentu saja mengundang kecurigaan bagi pihak musuh, selidik punya selidik, ternyata tempat itu (dimana Surdi sering mengirim nasi) ternyata tempat persembunyian Ru'in, maka tak lama kemudian dilakukan penyergapan sekaligus penggrebegan dan akhirnya setelah melakukan perlawanan yang gigih dan baku tembak malang bagi Ru'in, dia tertangkap oleh bekas anak buahnya sendiri.*

*'Ru'in dibunuh ditempat, dia dipenggal, kepalanya dipisahkan dari badannya dan dibuang kesungai Citandui. Hal ini dilakukan karena anak buahnya merasa yakin bahwa Ru'in teramat sakti jika tidak dilakukan hal demikian diyakini Ru'in akan hidup kembali.*

*'Matinya 'sang Tokoh Ru'in' ternyata menimbulkan perbedaan pendapat, pro dan kontra tampaknya telah ada sejak nabi Adam meninggalkan surga, menurut keluarga dan para simpatisan si korban, dia tewas dikeroyok oleh massa penduduk wilayah tengah yang notabene pendukung TNI. Hal ini dapat dimengerti karena yang pertama kali menemukan jenazah si korban adalah salah seorang anggota masyarakat penduduk wilayah tengah, yang lebih hebat lagi peristiwa itu membekas bahkan menimbulkan permusuhan antara masyarakat yang menduduki wilayah tengah dengan masyarakat yang menduduki wilayah selatan. Tentu saja sebagian besar masyarakat sekarang tidak mengetahui peristiwa ini sebagai salahsatu sebab timbulnya permusuhan.'*



inhabitants of the central [Hakekat] region of Kampung Gunung Tanjung (Karang Resik)—most especially in the case of a certain few residents there—were ‘scape goated’ due to the death of Pak Soma.<sup>21</sup>

In 1962 military forces at the national level under orders from Indonesia’s first president Soekarno captured the leader of the DI movement, Kartosoewirjo, and he was executed without trial. In the Karang Resik area this caused DI members to quickly *turun gunung* (descend from the mountain) and assimilate themselves into the more moderate Islamic community, to wit, into the then-NU and what would later become Pe regions.<sup>22</sup> Resentment being deeply harboured, the situation remained quite volatile in the area: *bagai api dalam sekam*, as one person in the Karang Resik area told me: ‘like embers set in rice husks’.

Three years later, then-Lieutenant-General Soeharto thwarted what was ostensibly a communist coup aimed at the Soekarno government by seizing control and quashing the attempt. In the process, Soeharto ultimately wrested power away from his predecessor, the process capped by way of the celebrated *Supersemar* event on 11 March 1966 (see, *inter alia*, Schwarz 1994:19-26).<sup>23</sup> With this, anyone in the

---

<sup>21</sup> ‘Peristiwa diatas terjadi seperti halnya yang menimpa Pak Soma Alias Onon, bedanya adalah Onon anggota biasa dari DI yang bertempat tinggal di wilayah utara Gunung Tanjung (Persis).

‘Pak Soma diculik oleh TNI ketika sedang dalam perjalanan menuju shalat Jum’at di sekitar Gunung Kadu, tempat itu adalah bagian dari wilayah Karang Resik yang terletak antara wilayah tengah dan wilayah utara. Yang pertama kali menegur Pak Soma adalah Pak Sa’in. Pak Sain [sic] adalah penduduk wilayah tengah yang memiliki peranan penting di TNI, oleh karenanya peristiwa ini turut menyuburkan bibit permusuhan diantara beberapa anggota masyarakat. Pak Soma yang akhirnya dibawa ke markas militer di Wanasigra dan tak kembali hingga sekarang, seperti halnya peristiwa yang menimpa Ru’in, matinya Pak Soma juga menimbulkan perbedaan pendapat di kalangan masyarakat. Untuk yang kedua kalinya masyarakat yang menempati wilayah tengah kampung Gunung Tanjung (Karang Resik) terutama beberapa tokohnya kembali menjadi ‘kambing hitam’ atas tewasnya Soma.’

<sup>22</sup>At the time Persis (Pe) was not yet represented in the region.

<sup>23</sup>For an analysis presenting counterbalance to the Indonesian government’s version of the attempted coup and its squelching, see Anderson and McVey 1971. Related to this while at the same time lending support to much of my argument below, Vatikotis (1993) states that ‘...in this country of  
(continued...)



country previously associated with communism or even remotely involved with the movement was tainted. Worse yet, in many villages this provided justification for summary execution by local community members themselves of those tagged as communists. This was ostensibly carried out to snuff out the party, but just as often it served to settle old vendettas.<sup>24</sup> Potential victims often included persons seen as not sufficiently religious, since 'communist' involvement was held tantamount to being 'atheist'.<sup>25</sup> Throughout the country

the bottled-up tensions that had been building for years exploded into the open....As Sukarno's Nasakom coalition crumbled and its constituent parts turned on each other, a bloodbath ensued with few historical parallels. The Communist Party, containing some 300 000 cadres and a full membership of around two million, was liquidated as a political force and hundreds of thousands of its members slaughtered (Schwarz 1994:20).<sup>26</sup>

As stated above, former DI members in Karang Resik had already settled back into the two areas designated NU and Pe on our map, whereas the area labelled Middle Region accommodated folk with ties historically closer to TNI—thus

---

<sup>23</sup>(...continued)

symbols and symbolism,...the Communist threat established a useful atmosphere of fear and vigilance which enabled the government to justify its leveling of society, and thus, in their eyes, safeguard stability' (:106).

There have even been accusations, never fully established, that Soeharto himself was involved in initiating events so as to galvanise the military and the nation into eradicating opposition to military preeminence; and possibly so that he might rise in position in the state (which, of course, he did).

<sup>24</sup>The greatest amount of bloodshed took place in East Java and Bali.

<sup>25</sup>Thus explaining the mass flight of many not previously registered with a particular religion on the island of Java in the mid- to late-sixties into one of the five governmentally 'accepted' religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism and Buddhism.

<sup>26</sup>In reference to the magnitude of change effected by this shift to the Soeharto government, Emmerson (1978) says: 'The attempted coup and counter-coup of 1965-1966 restructured politics more sweepingly than any events since the occupation and revolution of the 1940s. The head of state and founder of the nation, Sukarno, was disgraced, key policies of his regime were reversed, and the huge leftist constituency he cultivated was swept off the political map. Neither Indonesia's civil war in the 1950s nor the introduction of Guided Democracy shortly thereafter had such dramatic effects' (:83).

maintaining allegiances more broadly nationalist and patriotic.<sup>27</sup> During the late-Soekarno era, the first president fused together a programme known as Nasakom, an acronym amalgamated from the three seemingly contrary terms *Nasionalisme* (nationalism), *Agama* (religion) and *Komunisme* (communism). Just before the attempted coup, persons most loyal to the national government and to Soekarno would not have thought it odd to be labelled communist, religious and nationalist all in the same breath. In fact, such a profile accurately described many of the Hakekat residents of the time. In addition, many poor farmers and other common labourers throughout the island of Java gladly associated themselves with whichever faction that promised to better their situation at the local village level—something which the PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or ‘the Indonesian Communist Party’) and those affiliated with it frequently seemed to do. Consequently, it became quite easy to label persons even moderately involved in organisations loosely connected with the PKI, such as BTI (*Barisan Tani Indonesia* or ‘the Indonesian Farmers’ Alliance’), as individuals adopting a full-fledged communist agenda. Liddell (1978) explains:

Until 1965 virtually the only political organization defending the interests of the urban and rural poor was PKI. At the national level the party sought the support and protection of Sukarno, PNI,<sup>28</sup> and accessible elements within the armed forces, and reformulated its doctrines to conform with nationalist dogma, but in the villages of Java it often stood alone. Its leaders typically came from the ranks of small landowners, the landless, or the teachers in local elementary and secondary schools. Financial support for local party branches came for the most part from outside the locality itself, which made it

---

<sup>27</sup>Recall the way in which the designation TNI—in opposition to ABRI—was parsed in note 12 above. Locals in Karang Resik’s Hakekat or Middle Region have always exclusively used the term TNI for pre-New Order forces, i.e., their forebears.

<sup>28</sup>The PNI or *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (the ‘Indonesian National Party’) was a broad-based, pro-Soekarno, nationalist coalition serving the interests of more middle- to upper-middle class (and even elite) Indonesians.



possible for PKI leaders to maintain their autonomy from the larger landowners and village officials who led PNI, NU, and Masyumi<sup>29</sup> (often in de facto coalition against PKI). In the last years of Guided Democracy Sukarno's protection was also an important condition underlying PKI's aggressiveness and occasional ability to win a battle. As the slaughter of its adherents in 1965 and 1966 demonstrated, however, PKI never became a party of militants prepared to fight a war. Its mass strength, such as it was, was based instead on the general recognition that PKI was willing and able to pursue the socioeconomic ends of the poorest strata of the population, to defend the interests of the *wong cilik* (little man) against those on whom he always been [*sic*] dependent in the past. When such help was available, the villager showed himself willing and able to make use of it (:192).

Thus, over a very short period beginning on 30 September 1965, communist identity was recast from a position of strength supported by the central government into one demonised by the prevailing anti-communist power holders in Jakarta. And while West Java did not seem to experience mass anti-communist killings during the years of 1965-66 similar to other portions of the island,<sup>30</sup> there still were ways and means available for settling old scores.

In Karang Resik, since persons in the Hakekat region had been most loyal to the Soekarno administration, demonisation was simply inevitable, especially in light of (1) how many former DI members had since safely slipped back into Karang Resik's more overtly religious regions and (2) how deeply these returnees harboured grudges against the TNI folk and Middle Region residents for opposing them the previous twenty years. Consequently, those with DI sympathies wasted little time in

---

<sup>29</sup>Masyumi was a federation of Indonesian Islamic organisations into one large amalgamated Islamic political party. It was particularly active in the 1950s before being dissolved by presidential decree in 1960. See Liddell 1978:172-177; Samson 1978:198-199; Schwarz 1994:12, 13, 17.

<sup>30</sup>Most likely due to the West Java army high command and its then leader, General Ibrahim Adjie, not tolerating such events in the region (see Jackson 1978a:7-8). This, of course, lends credibility to the view that the Armed Forces engineered and manipulated the bloodshed for its own purposes in the other regions. See note 23 above.

fingering many of the persons in Middle Region as communists or communist sympathisers.

It was a time of lists. Not only did the names of targeted leftists circulate, but it became a matter of some pride to surviving officials, especially those with vaguely suspect pre-1965 connections, that their names had cropped up on rosters of intended victims reportedly drawn up by the PKI around the time of the coup (Emmerson 1978:91).

Word has it that lists were drawn up in Karang Resik as well—with high profile former DI figures taking an active role in rooting out communists (giving credence to Emmerson's statement, since *these* were the persons with 'vaguely suspect pre-1965 connections'—namely, with DI). Many persons from the Middle Region area (now older or already deceased) were sent into internal exile on Buru Island in the province of Maluku, sometimes for as long as ten years.<sup>31</sup> In my involvement in the region, very few people I talked to from Middle Region did not have at least one close family member who served time there.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup>On a description of Buru Island and its role as site of internal exile for political prisoners, see May 1978: ch. 1. I have attempted to interview several of these but my overtures have always been rebuffed. The answer I consistently receive (by way of a third party) often close to ten years after the fact is '*belum siap*'—'not yet ready.'

Interestingly enough, one of Indonesia's premier novelists, the internationally renowned Pramoedya Ananta Toer, was incarcerated not merely by the Dutch prior to Indonesia's independence but also by the Soeharto government during the seventies—the latter being on Buru. His crime under Soeharto was penning so-called seditious tales dealing with Indonesia's history, including four works of historical fiction at the time he was sent into internal exile by the New Order regime from 1969 to 1979 (this collection is commonly referred to as the 'Buru Quartet'—since this was the venue where he first recited the tales orally in serial form early each morning to his fellow prisoners). Rather than centring on events contemporary to Pramoedya's day, his plots depict the climate of colonialism prevailing around the turn of the century. Obviously, the Soeharto government must have grasped the authority and puissance of history retold. The Buru Quartet was banned for the duration of Soeharto's tenure and Pramoedya remained under house arrest until only just recently; see Pramoedya Ananta Toer 1990, 1996a, 1996b and 1997.

<sup>32</sup>Official government reports claim that '10,000 communists' were sent into exile on the island in 1969 (note the time lag between this and the 'coup'—at least two years later, perhaps longer!), all of them being released in 1979. However, certain groups and human rights agencies, most notably Amnesty International, claimed that there were still prisoners kept there as recently as 1991, in conditions resembling 'Nazi concentration camps.' See *Jakarta Post* 1991a. For a sobering  
(continued...)



As we will see below, the power imbalance and scape goating holds to this day. For the past thirty-plus years, Middle Region residents have experienced a disparity in authority and control; to wit, their access to vital resources has been increasingly constricted by a small elite faction—those in the NU region and now also increasingly by Pe newcomers to the area. This attenuation of resources has involved not only a reduction in their ability to satisfy material needs, but also in a diminution of status, self-esteem and self-confidence which they enjoyed in a bygone era—when they were seen as public-spirited, nation-defending TNI soldiers and allies.

The above describes a dizzying commingling of local factors with intrigues prevailing at the national level. We will return to examine local outcomes resulting from this. But at this point we must ask what has enabled such an attenuation at both the regional and national level. What was its mechanism? It is this that I would like to look at now.

### *Shifts in Kampung Patronage and Power*

Authority at the village (kampung<sup>33</sup>) level in West Java was historically held by local governmental or quasi-governmental leaders on the one hand (constituting the formal leadership structure), or by members of the local village elite on the other (persons who more or less constituted the informal leadership structure). Those in this leadership structure maintained strategic linkages with power sources outside

---

<sup>32</sup>(...continued)

recounting of typical events and experiences of a Buru resident, see Pramoedya Ananta Toer 1999 (also note the opening quotation in Chapter Four for a sample from this work).

<sup>33</sup>The term kampung is normally translated hamlet or village in English (the former if constituting a borough on the fringe of an urban centre, the latter if based as a community in a rural context).

the village, thus situating themselves as conduits of outside resources by way of dominant standing over local, poor kampung residents. In short, those in local positions of leadership historically held almost all of the village power.

In fact, Karl Jackson noted that in the 1960s 'virtually all Sundanese villagers [were] organized into networks of dyadic, personal, diffuse, affect-laden and enduring superior-subordinate relationships' (as cited in Pye 1985:112); that is to say, into patron-client bonds. In fact, so pervasive were these sorts of structures in Indonesia as a whole that distinct Indonesian terms developed for their description.

In Indonesia, both traditional authority and patronage are referred to as *bapak-anak buah* relationships. The father (*bapak*) accumulates authority by building what is, in effect, an extended family for which he must assume diffuse responsibilities. The *bapak* forms relations with his *anak buah* (children) by assuming responsibility for their spiritual, material, and social needs. The primary characteristic of *bapak-anak buah* relations is that the bonds are diffuse, personal, nonideological, and in their genesis apolitical (Jackson 1978c:350).

Though in no way equitably aligned in terms of power distribution, by virtue of social pressure and local tactics which took advantage of the wealthier population's need to save face, local poorer kampung residents were at least able to draw out apportionment from the surfeit of the upper stratum's largesse. Pye goes so far as to state that, in these sorts of alliances

...the patron needs his clients, not as a general needs soldiers to be risked in battle, but as pilots need enlisted men to maintain the planes in which the officers risk their lives while the enlisted men remain safely behind. The pattern of power in these patron-client ties can be, and usually is, so complex that it is not at all certain whether it is the few patrons or the many clients who are manipulating the relationships. The Javanese would insist that only the patron has power, according to their definition of power; yet they will also acknowledge that clients can get their way if they are smart (1985:118).



The poorer village folk were at least allowed the possibility of calculating the size, shape and percentage of local resources rightfully theirs and, by calling upon subtle ingenuity, they could often even prise away this share should patrons be less than forthcoming. After all, patrons had a local reputation to uphold and a community standing to safeguard—something put at risk in the event local leadership could be characterised as being untrue to their end of the patron-client bargain.

When glancing at the story of leadership in the region, the above arrangement seems very much in keeping with traditional Javanese and Sundanese views of personal authority vis-à-vis power. In sharp contrast to Western views which generally depict power as ideational in quality, limitless and decidedly ambiguous in terms of moral legitimacy (Anderson 1990:21),<sup>34</sup> the Javanese and Sundanese<sup>35</sup> have traditionally cast power as a tangible, finite, monolithic property manifesting little if any moral significance or quandaries (1990:21).<sup>36</sup> The chart on the following page offers a visual schematic of the contrast between the Javanese and Sundanese concept and that generally prevailing in Western understanding.

---

<sup>34</sup>The Western view, in Benedict Anderson's words, sees power as '...an abstraction, a formula for certain observed patterns of social interaction' (1990:21).

<sup>35</sup>Ajip Rosidi (a prominent Sundanese author and observer of Sundanese culture), lists five hindrances which make it difficult to distinguish the Sundanese as a cultural group from other ethnic groups in Indonesia (1985:2-10; he primarily cites the difficulty in distinguishing the Sundanese person from the Javanese person). These hindrances are: (1) the existence of widely varying personalities among representative Sundanese public figures; (2) the cultural climate which varies significantly enough from Sundanese village to Sundanese village (cf. Ajip Rosidi 1984:130); (3) the obvious presence of non-Sundanese individuals living within the province of West Java; (4) the presence of Sunda speaking villages in Central Java; as well as (5) the tremendous historical influence (and hence similarity) that the Javanese people have had upon the Sundanese (Ajip also adds that this Java-Sunda influence cuts both ways, not simply from the majority Javanese to the less numerous Sundanese).

<sup>36</sup>Pye makes the following statement about *power*, directly in reference to the give and take apparent in Southeast Asia patronage structures: 'Such [occasional] successes [on the part of clients over patrons], however, are not seen as manifestations of power, for power is a matter of status and not a means of achieving purposeful ends (1985:118).



## Contrasting Images of Power

Power's:	Modern Western Concept of Power	Traditional Javanese (Sundanese) Concept of Power
<b>Type</b>	<p><i>Abstract</i></p> <p>Strictly speaking, <i>Power</i> does not exist. The term power is commonly used to describe relationships or observed patterns of social interaction.</p>	<p><i>Concrete</i></p> <p><i>Power</i> exists, independent of its possible users. It is not a theoretical postulate but an existential reality.</p>
<b>Source(s)</b>	<p><i>Heterogeneous</i></p> <p>Different types of power are treated as separate variables (e.g., political power, economic power, etc.), influencing behaviour.</p>	<p><i>Homogeneous</i></p> <p>All <i>Power</i> is of the same type, having the same source.</p>
<b>Accumulation</b>	<p><i>No Inherent Limits</i></p> <p>Power is theoretically unlimited since it is conceptualised as abstract and hinges upon social interaction.</p>	<p><i>Limited</i></p> <p>Since <i>Power</i> simply exists, its amount is cosmically constant. Concentration of <i>Power</i> in one place requires a proportional diminution elsewhere.</p>
<b>Moral Legitimacy</b>	<p><i>Ambiguous</i></p> <p>Since power is heterogeneous in type and abstract in nature (with actual reference to relationships), it follows that not all power is legitimate—ethical deliberation is incumbent upon those seeking access to power.</p>	<p><i>Does Not Raise the Question of Legitimacy</i></p> <p>Since all <i>Power</i> derives from a single homogeneous source, <i>Power</i> itself antecedes questions of good and evil.</p>

Source: Anderson 1990:21-23



Thus power has been conceptualised almost as a material substance, a possession which one either has or does not—a finite commodity bestowed upon a person blessed.<sup>37</sup> This mental image has had enormous bearing upon the manner in which leadership and authority have generally functioned in traditional West Java cultural settings. The leader in West Java has typically been framed as the *wadah*, or container, for power. Consequently, it has been incumbent upon this leader to strive to fortify and guarantee his hold over his devotees, since this is the substantiation that his power has been adequately maintained. This innate power, or *téja* (radiance) as it is often called in Indonesia, has in part been exemplified by the leader's

...ability to maintain a smooth tautness and to act like a magnet that aligns scattered iron filings in a patterned field of force. Conversely, the signs of a lessening in the tautness of a ruler's Power and of a diffusion of his strength are seen equally in manifestations of disorder in the natural world—floods, eruptions, and plagues—and in inappropriate modes of social behavior—thief, greed, and murder....Anti-social behavior arises from a ruler's declining Power, but does not in itself further diminish that Power. It is a symptom, not a cause, of his decline. Therefore, a ruler who has once permitted natural and social disorders to appear finds it particularly difficult to reconstitute his authority. Javanese would tend to believe that, if he still had the Power, the disorders would never have arisen: They do not stem ultimately from autonomous social or economic conditions, but from a looseness or diffusion of Power...(Anderson 1990:33).<sup>38</sup>

---

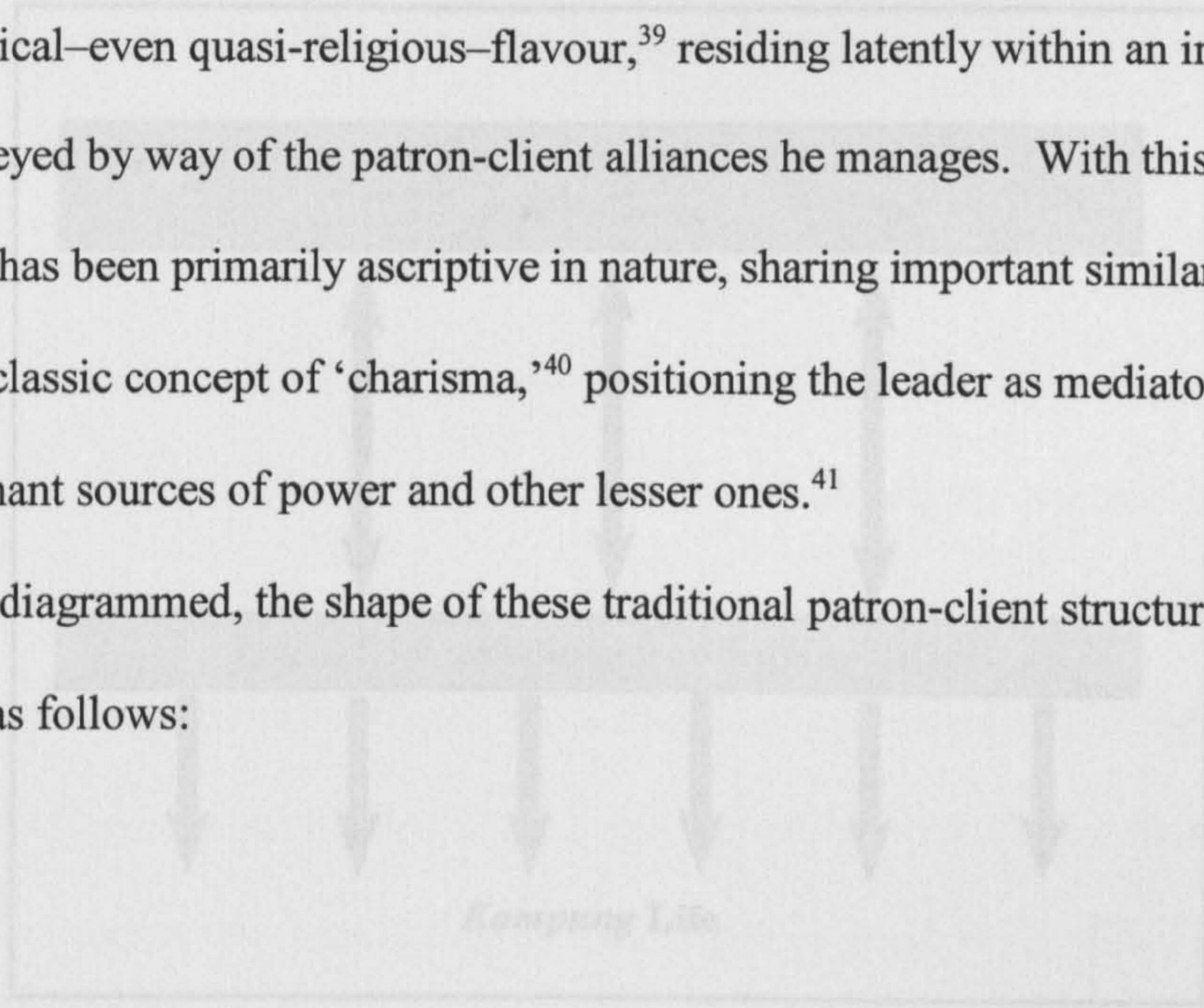
<sup>37</sup>Such a pattern is reminiscent of anthropologist George Foster's thesis known as *the Image of Limited Good*. Foster states that many tradition-based societies take societal, 'goods', whether tangible or intangible—inclusive of money, honour, reputation, success and presumably power—to be fixed in terms of quantity and thus scarce in terms of availableness. Consequently, on this view all exchanges ultimately sum to zero and, therefore, all accumulation by one party is at the expense of another. See Foster 1965, 1967 (esp. Chapter Six) and 1972. For an edited volume in tribute to Foster which broadly examines this thesis (as well as others from Foster), see Clark *et al.* 1979. For a look at *Limited Good* as an anthropological construct in light of the New Testament text, see Malina 2001:81-107.

<sup>38</sup>At the time of Soeharto's fall from power, the news magazine *Newsweek* made the following observations: 'Superstitious Javanese say Suharto knew he had lost his divine mandate to rule after the death of his wife, known as Ibu Tien, in 1996. Some Indonesians derisively called her Madame "Tien Percent" because of her reputation for taking a cut, but at least she tried to curb the greed of her rapacious brood. After her death, Suharto suffered from phlebitis, kidney ailments and  
(continued...)



Thus, traditional power has been imbued with a transcendental, metaphysical—even quasi-religious—flavour,<sup>39</sup> residing latently within an individual and conveyed by way of the patron-client alliances he manages. With this, personal authority has been primarily ascriptive in nature, sharing important similarities with Weber's classic concept of 'charisma,'<sup>40</sup> positioning the leader as mediator between more regnant sources of power and other lesser ones.<sup>41</sup>

If diagrammed, the shape of these traditional patron-client structures can be depicted as follows:



### Traditional Kampung Patronage

In light of the role enjoyed by such metaphysically-flavoured Javanese and Sundanese images of leadership, it should not surprise us if a variation on these sorts of structures is what has served as the governmental alignment of choice in Indonesia over the past thirty years. During that time, recently ousted president

---

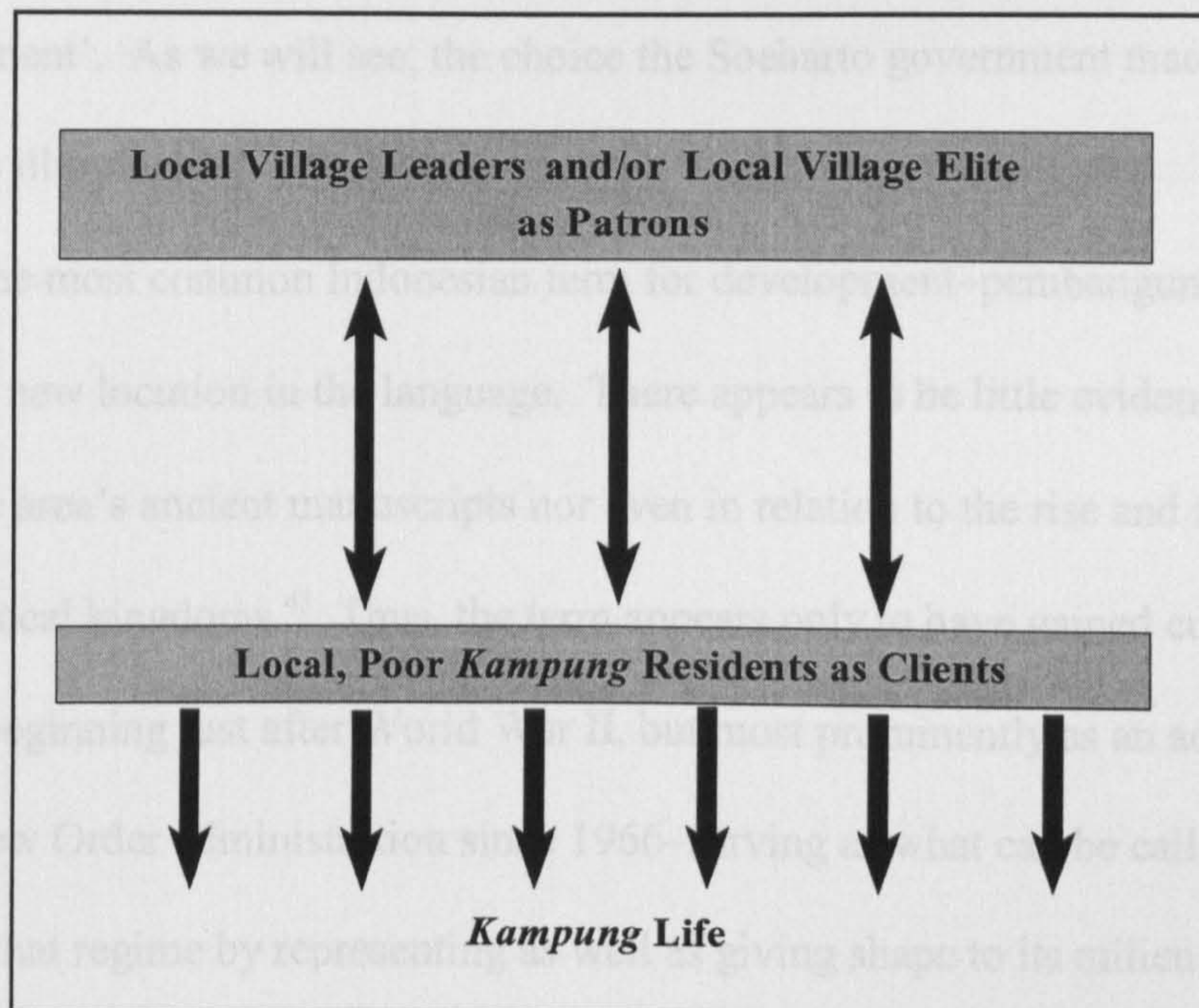
<sup>38</sup>(...continued)  
depression. He had little interest in reining in his children and cronies. Suharto coddled his clan to the end, and his country paid an exorbitant price' (1998d:22).

<sup>39</sup>*Power* in the Javanese or Sundanese sense seems to have latent within it a deified, independent quality to it. Cf. Anderson's comments: 'The old usage of the word *power*, which survives in such phrases as "The Great Power" or "Power had gone out of him" [Gospel according to St. Mark, 5:30] [*sic*] approximates the Javanese idea, but by no means coincides with it' (1990:20, n. 8); likewise, '...the well-known mystical formula *Tuhan adalah Aku* (God is I) expresses the concreteness of the Javanese idea of power. The divine power is the essence of I' (1990:22, n. 11).

<sup>40</sup>Cf. Anderson 1990:chs. 1 & 2.

<sup>41</sup>For a concisely detailed look at patron-client relationships, cf. Eisenstadt and Roniger 1981; esp. :284; also, cf. 1984. For a look at patronage in its Southeast Asian form and its relationship to political machinations, see Scott 1972. Finally, for an examination of the construct as it functions in West Java amongst the Sundanese specifically, see the already cited chapter by Jackson 1978b.





### **Traditional *Kampung* Patronage**

In light of the role enjoyed by such metaphysically-flavoured Javanese and Sundanese images of leadership, it should not surprise us if a variation on these sorts of structures is what has served as the governmental alignment of choice in Indonesia over the past thirty years. During that time, recently-ousted president Soeharto boldly positioned himself as a sort of national benefactor father-figure, self-typified by his personal designation of choice: 'Father of Development' (*Bapak Pembangunan*).<sup>42</sup>

As hinted at by this designation, significant insight concerning the contour of the Soeharto government these last thirty years or so is available by observing the way in which development language has been used. Especially noteworthy are two

---

<sup>42</sup>One might object that *Bapak* in the Indonesian language can just as easily mean 'Mr' as 'father'. As shall be seen shortly, however, in light of the ubiquitous custodial image nationally promoted, the former has clearly *not* been the intended idea.



distinct terms in the Indonesian language, each carrying their own connotations of 'development'. As we will see, the choice the Soeharto government made between the two is illuminating.

The most common Indonesian term for development—*pembangunan*—seems a relatively new locution in the language. There appears to be little evidence of it in any of the area's ancient manuscripts nor even in relation to the rise and fall of the region's local kingdoms.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the term appears only to have gained currency this century, beginning just after World War II, but most prominently as an adornment for the New Order administration since 1966—serving as what can be called a *key word* for that regime by representing as well as giving shape to its milieu (Ariel Heryanto 1988:8).<sup>44</sup>

More interesting yet, *pembangunan* was selected by New Order leaders during a period—the early 70s—when its counter-part English and Spanish renderings were being severely critiqued as nefarious instruments of neo-colonialism (1988:19). As the country responsible for initiating the celebrated Non-Aligned Movement amongst non-Western countries,<sup>45</sup> certainly Indonesia's leaders would have known the connotation they were taking on. Thus, it seems there must have been a distinct motivation driving the selection.

---

<sup>43</sup>Ariel Heryanto points to the fact that the earliest dictionary he could find offering *pembangunan* as one of its listings is 'no more than 40 years old' (1988:8).

<sup>44</sup>'The word "*Pembangunan*" in present-day Indonesian not only has become what Raymond Williams would call a *key-word*, but it has also become one of the two most important *key-words* (the other is *Pancasila*). As *key-words*, these terms are "significant," "binding," and "indicative...in certain forms of thought"' (Ariel Heryanto 1988:8).

<sup>45</sup>At the historic Bandung-based Asia-Africa Conference in 1955.



We begin to get insight into the logic of the decision as we look at the equally acceptable second choice: *perkembangan*—a term derived from the root word ‘*kembang*’ or ‘flower’ in the Indonesian (as well as Sundanese) language. Thus, this word emphasises a more organic change, a flowering of potentialities already latent within a process. Furthermore, since the stress is upon internal promise and potential, the *perkembangan* process is decidedly more difficult to control—in fact, historically it has most commonly been used to describe natural events and forces which function outside the dictates of human command, such as wind blowing or a fire starting.

This being so, Ariel Heryanto even portrays the *perkembangan* process as a more religiously-steeped world view in opposition to the mechanistic emphasis communicated by *pembangunan*:

Believing that an incident ‘develops’ [*berkembang*] [*sic*]-in a society that once believed in the existence of a supernatural force regulating the order of the universe—combines a hope that the incident will be controlled by the laws of nature with a hope for its resolution through the return of the original order and harmony. Although having several special characteristics, the process of flowering is no more than a progression of sprouting, growing, bearing fruit, and forming seeds. There is thus a ‘religious’ quality to the meaning of ‘*berkembang*’ (1988:16).

*Pembangunan*, on the other hand, derives from ‘*bangun*’, a term which for the last couple of generations<sup>46</sup> has carried a connotation of ‘building’ or ‘construction’. Thus, the government’s selection seems to opt against a natural,

---

<sup>46</sup>Ariel Heryanto points out that the term ‘*bangun*’ actually designates two overarching categories of meaning: (1) to build and (2) to arouse (someone who has been asleep) (1988:9-10). During the period of Indonesian political and ideological foment in the 1930s, when focus was upon rousing the masses in order to throw off the bonds of colonialisation, the latter tended to be the connotation—that is, at those rare times when *bangun* was even used. However, in today’s climate the first image is definitely the overwhelming connotation residing in the term.

spiritually-imbued growth process whose stimulus comes from within the local context in partnership with local populations, in deference to an engineered and masterminded endeavour brought about by necessarily prescient, paternalistic motivators external to the context (1988:15-16).

Such a choice emerges even more interesting in light of what development theorist David Korten (1980) outlines as two divergent styles apparent in virtually all development planning. He classifies these styles as (1) 'the blueprint approach' (greatly analogous to pembangunan) and (2) 'the learning process approach' (with affinities to perkembangan).<sup>47</sup>

In the blueprint approach,

...researchers are supposed to provide data from pilot projects and other studies which will allow the planners to choose the most cost effective project design for achieving a given development outcome and to reduce it to a blueprint for implementation. Administrators of the implementing organization are supposed to execute the project plan faithfully, much as a contractor would follow construction blueprints, specifications, and schedules. An evaluation researcher is supposed to measure actual changes in the target population and report actual versus planned changes to the planners at the end of the project cycle so that the blueprints can be revised... (:496).

Korten points out that this type of development planning is intent on making sharp distinctions between the role of (a) the researcher, (b) the planner and (c) the administrator of economic development programmes or projects (1980:497). These three professionals are viewed as possessing discretely separate tasks often carried

---

<sup>47</sup>As a 'passive-active' dyad, Korten's schema is quite similar—as is the pembangunan/perkembangan contrast—to Paulo Freire's distinction between two distinct pedagogical styles: the 'banking' method and the 'problem-posing' method. In the former, the student is pictured as a passive, empty receptacle into which knowledge as 'facts and information' need only be poured. As Freire describes it, this represents an asymmetric 'subject-object' binomial which serves to dehumanise the student. In contrast, Freire advocates a 'problem-posing' approach, which is based upon a 'subject-subject' dyad, wherein the teacher behaves more like a facilitator who assists the student to discover the world, so that it will open up before him or her. See Freire 1990. In the next chapter we will look at this feature of Freire's thought in relation to marks of the incarnational model.



out in completely different locations (1980:497). Great emphasis is placed on the expert with a view toward repairing problems by way of expertise generated almost entirely from outside the local context.

The blueprint approach commonly assumes that the knowledge required for the preparation of program designs can be generated independently of the organizational capacity required for its utilization. This is reflected in its sharp differentiation between the roles of researcher, planner, and administrator—often assumed to be from different organizations—which *inevitably separates knowledge from decision from action*' (1980:499, emphasis added).

Hence, in the blueprint approach, knowledge is seen as (1) coming from outside, (2) served up by professionals and (3) applied as an objective 'fix' to the problems encountered. In contrast, the learning process approach relies upon '...a well developed capacity for responsive and anticipatory adaptation—organizations that: (a) embrace error; (b) plan with the people; and (c) link knowledge building with action' (1980:498). The New Order government, in their promotion of *pembangunan*, opted for the former.<sup>48</sup>

It is not difficult to see how Indonesia's outside, expert-oriented *pembangunan* process was tied to the former president's person by means of direct linkage to the country's patronage system of leadership.

The presence of a Father of Development [*Bapak Pembangunan*] [*sic*]...explains *Pembangunan* as a unit of social activity with 'familial' characteristics. Such a Father [*sic*] is head of the family in the *Pembangunan* household not because he desires to occupy this position, but because of the will of destiny. As a Father [*sic*], he is not a person chosen through election, who is lent a mandate of authority for a limited time by his electors, and who must take responsibility for his actions as holder of this borrowed mandate. In

---

<sup>48</sup>The variance highlighted here also aligns considerably with the contrast emphasised by James Scott between *mētis* and approaches inspired by what he labels *high modernism* (1998; see note 12 in Chapter Four below). For examples of other analysts who point to the distinction between *pembangunan* and *perkembangan*, see Emmerson :116 and Hobart :7..

the Indonesian family, as well as in the families of various societies outside Indonesia, there is a prohibition against children 'sinning' [*mendurhaka*] [*sic*] against their Father [*sic*], no matter how culpable the Father [*sic*] in the eyes of his children. A Father [*sic*] is a father to his children not only during his lifetime, but even after his death. Likewise, children have only one natal father, not only in their lifetimes but even after their deaths (Ariel Heryanto 1988:21).

Or again:

In post-1971 self-characterizations of the new Order a constantly recurring theme has been the image of the national community as a family, with President Suharto or the government as a whole in the role of father and the people, or organized groups, as the children. The metaphor reflects closely the president's conception of the kind of participation system he would like to create: a public that is deferential, a government that speaks with a single voice, and an interaction pattern in which the government provides guidance and is attentive to group and public opinion but obligated to grant only those requests which in its judgment contribute to the well-being both of those directly concerned and of the whole community (Liddle 1978:184).

During the Soeharto years, the notions of national progress<sup>49</sup> and well-being were only rarely separated from the image of the aging, grandfatherly president.<sup>50</sup>

Much of this relies upon the traditional image of fatherhood historically pervasive on much of the island of Java. In opposition the more organic, nurturing and caring image of the Javanese mother,

---

<sup>49</sup>For a critique of the *progress* idea in development and its relationship to the Christian faith, see Sbert 1993. As I have indicated, I will contend below for a decidedly Christian manner of actuating development practice by examining the biblical concept of incarnation as a fertile motif with significant potential for promoting salubrious participation in local communities.

<sup>50</sup>A fact symbolized by, up until his fall from power on 21 May 1998, the legal requirement for all Indonesian businesses, governmental offices and agencies to conspicuously portray Soeharto's portrait in their office(s). Thereafter, with B. J. Habibie occupying the role of president, his image became the replacement of Soeharto's familiar visage. However, this sort of symbolisation commanded by no means the same attention it once did; in short, it seemed more a vestige of the previous administration. For the more recent presidents—Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) and Megawati Soekarnoputri (now seated as president)—this sort of imagery has taken on a different, less sacralised connotation.



..as soon as [a] child begins to speak...he is taught to develop a formal attitude towards his father. Before the war, village officials who often imitated the life-style of urban civil servants insisted that their children address them in the formal *krami* style of speech. No village child, however, addresses his mother in *krami*' (Koentjaraningrat 1985:110).

Elaborating upon this Magnis-Suseno (1996) states that, beginning at the age of five, such a significant shift occurs in the father's role that he changes from being intimate with the child (like the rest of the extended family—verbally engaging the baby with antics, sounds and gestures) to exemplifying a distant and dangerous force, linked more to the threatening world fixed external to the household. As a result, the child's attitude toward the father thereafter evinces a bearing of fear and dreadful respect (:46-47). Such an image is especially pertinent in light of Soeharto's own background and his upbringing—thoroughly Javanese as it was couched in the outskirts of the sultanate city of Yogyakarta, where he was raised. Therefore, while the term 'father' might from one angle seem to carry organic connotations of nurtured growth, nourished potentialities, warmth and the inducement of biological blossoming and change, we dare not gloss the concept this way—linked as this would seem to be to the *perkembangan* image—since such an image is not the manner in which it has traditionally been framed by those from within the culture. In the parlance of New Order prescription, 'fatherhood' is most definitely a *pembangunan* term.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup>Commenting upon this image of fatherhood in 1913, Hasan Mustapa said that for the Sundanese '...advice is at times given by means of telling stories concerning forbears, sometimes by means of frightening the person with a scary story or fact, sometimes by way of coaxing him or her by offering something of interest, but perhaps the easiest way to make the advice stick and to truly convince is by declaring the following: "Don't do that which is considered taboo." For instance, "Don't sit on the basket."

The child asks: "Why?"

The parent answers: "Taboo".

(continued...)

Consequently, 'construction blueprints' as opposed to 'blooming flowers' became the development trope of choice. Little was left to chance in a process so in need of 'fatherly' researchers, planners and administrators—the expertise of the expert. And since Soeharto served as the sacralised and feared 'Father of Development' who pointed toward 'blueprint' images of betterment and progress, he and his minions became the outside experts—ostensibly leading the way to progress, a road which they defined and only they knew how to navigate. This being so, they

---

<sup>51</sup>(...continued)

The child asks again: "What will happen?"

The parent answers: "Does it have to be spelled out for you?"

If the child persists in asking like this, the parent will snap back: "What will happen is you'll die far from home!" (1991:6, my translation of that below).

[*Kadang-kadang memberi nasihat dengan jalan menceritakan para leluhur dan menakut-nakuti dengan sesuatu yang mungkin menakutkan dibujuk dengan sesuatu yang menarik hati, mungkin akan lebih mudah melekat dalam hatinya dan bertambah kepercayaannya, cukup dengan perkataan: jangan melakukan sesuatu yang dianggap tabu. Misalnya "jangan menduduki niru". Si anak itu bertanya: "Mengapa?" Jawab orang tua: "tabu". Anak itu bertanya lagi: "Apa akibatnya?" Jawab Orang tua: "Apakah harus dikupas isinya?" Kalau anak itu memaksa menanyakan akibatnya, orang tua menjawabnya sambil membentak "Akibatnya bakal mati di perantauan!"*]

A similar mechanism applies for the Javanese: 'The key to Javanese interpersonal relationships is the notion that no two people are equal and that they relate to each other in a hierarchical fashion. This fact of interpersonal inequality finds abundant recognition in the very use of the Javanese language that always acknowledges the relative status of the other person in respect to the speaker. Consequently the Javanese social order may be seen to consist of an infinite number of status positions that are each characterized by specific duties, expectations, and a right to respect. These differences in status are not necessarily differences in authority or power among persons, but reflect the recognition that life is ordered that way, that some people are older than others, or belong to an older generation (*awu*) even if they are physically younger, or that some people are wiser and have better understanding of life. This vertical dimension of social life, and of life in general, is the very backbone of the Javanese moral order and is legitimized by the idea that superiors are somehow closer to the truth than inferiors and thus deserving respect. This hierarchical ordering, with the parent-child relationship at its core, should provide the stability and continuity of social life' (Mulder 1987:44).

While much of this is breaking down, it is happening ever so slowly. See *Newsweek* 1998a, esp. the following: 'Young Indonesians still adhere to strict family traditions. Consider the dual world of a young businesswoman in Jakarta. She wears miniskirts, regularly dates foreign men and lives a totally independent life. But when she goes home, according to traditions of Java, she puts away her miniskirts in favor of batik sarongs and literally crouches and walks like a duck when she is in the presence of grandmother—a sign of hierarchical deference. "I just go along with these things," says the woman. "I'd rather not rock the boat"' (:46).

Of course, these traditional images of fatherhood align to a large degree with those historically conventional images of power just examined above.



had little tolerance for those outside their number since, by definition, outsiders were deemed ignorant and child-like, deservedly passive and quiet.

This resulted in a profound lack of space for contest. There was scarce opportunity for disagreement when it came to state-craft since no 'child' should argue with his or her 'parent'—a result seen as the height of insubordination, rebelliousness and disobedience. Does not *Father* always know best? Is this not the natural order of things? Highlighting the other side of the metaphor, can the building possibly take issue with the architect? Is not a building meant to be passive, silently subjected to blueprints and construction activities? Would not disagreement with an architect or a contractor—the experts in the cause of building—be considered a serious hindrance to progress in the construction process? Acquiescence to expert knowledge was the way forward and anything counter to this was pitched as an obstacle to development—deserving of speedy and effective removal.<sup>52</sup>

Such was the result of the development discourse which resounded on the New Order stage,<sup>53</sup> all the more so as Soeharto became thoroughly ensconced in his centralised power base (this occurring approximately from the year 1983 until his fall from power in 1998).<sup>54</sup> During that time, the manner in which pronouncements

---

<sup>52</sup>Middle Region residents in Karang Resik have told me that they have constantly been presented with two choices: either they can 'support development' (*mendukung pembangunan*) or they can 'obstruct development' (*menghambat pembangunan*). This loomed large especially every five years, when election time rolls round. In times gone by, to be 'pro-development' has amounted to a vote for *Golkar* (Soeharto's political party), whereas to cast an opposing vote has meant morphing into an obstruction.

<sup>53</sup>To pinch the title of Yudi Latif and Idi Subandy Ibrahim's impressive book (1996).

<sup>54</sup>See Mackie and MacIntyre (:5, 9) for two schematics detailing the different eras of the Soeharto government, especially as these interface with political climate, power structure and

(continued...)

were made in the name of *pemerintah* ('government')<sup>55</sup> seemed to signal that the Indonesian public was in attendance before a huge, omniscient bureaucratic parent. As *de facto* children, nothing was expected of the bulk of the country's citizens but obedience—*pemerintah* knew best. Here before them was their ubiquitous, all-wise, patriarch in charge of solving the nation's problems.

But in order to continue to validate his hold on the presidency, Soeharto had to be seen as living up to his power-steeped position—the failure of which finally led in large part to his downfall.<sup>56</sup> Even so, up until that time the success of such a validation offered the president a chance to further establish himself as the fulcrum of the national patronage system. As the 'Father of Development' Soeharto—in keeping with the quasi-religious tenor of these alliances—even depicted his grab for power in 1965-66 and his three-decade plus struggle to maintain that power as more or less sacrally ordained events, thereby rendering it as no power grab at all but rather an almost divinely-consecrated salvific confirmation of his patriarchal position. By hallowing his reign with supernal features, Soeharto could keep opposition to a minimum.

---

<sup>54</sup>(...continued)  
opportunity for grass-roots participation.

<sup>55</sup>Even the word used for government in Indonesia—*pemerintah*—underlines the point: the root word is *perintah*, which is the common term for 'to order' or 'to command'. Thus, the government are not primarily those who govern, but those who deliver orders, issue directives or give commands.

<sup>56</sup>Which culminated in riots and an increasingly vocal call for reform leading to his standing down on 21 May 1998. Almost presciently, Emerson had this to say in 1978: 'Can a bureaucracy be both powerful and open? Beyond what optimal point does an additional increase in the capacity to satisfy needs mean a decrease in sensitivity to them? In a hierarchic political culture where urban elite and rural mass are already far apart, as on Java where two-thirds of all Indonesians live, the optimum may be soon reached and easily passed: The stronger the ruler, the more impervious. In the extreme, as feedback channels are shut down and mass grievances pile up unrecognized at the entrances, violence may take over to flush out the system' (:83-84). Cf. *Newsweek* 1998c.



The New Order's 'consecration'—tied as it was to nation-building and economic recovery after the Soekarno era—funded an image of the state intimately tied to governmentally-endowed development schemes Soeharto lionized and brandished as badges of legitimacy. According to Vatikiotis (1993), during Soeharto's reign development was '...regarded both as a stamp of his legitimacy and the cornucopia out of which patronage and personal gain could be pulled at will' (:55).<sup>57</sup> This image of the state had constituent parts. It will help us to look at these a bit more closely.

Development discourse in Indonesia was fashioned from a range of centrally concocted symbolic elements originating from the outside (although the government framed some of these as autochthonous), which themselves were intimately blended with the already-described patron-client constructs. The result of this mix was particularly noxious for poor, marginalised Sundanese persons in kampung communities like Karang Resik's Middle Region residents. In short, it left them socially and politically orphaned—disenfranchised outside the national patronage playing field.

The concocted, external state emblems seemed to make their appearance at a particular point in time, namely, just round the period of national independence in the late 40s. Thus, while these constructs certainly played a significant role in Indonesia's symbolic history since its inception, they truly gained currency during

---

<sup>57</sup>Vatikiotis points out that this wreaks havoc not only upon governmental practices but also on the fiscally astute practice of separating funds from the owner in the day to day affairs of an NGO—a fact which made these foundations very susceptible to corruption. 'Part of the problem is cultural. "In Indonesia, assets are inseparable from the person they are attached to," an Indonesian lawyer said. The practice of being generous anonymously is rare in a society where philanthropy is synonymous with power' (1990:63).

the New Order regime, being deftly manipulated on Indonesia's political, economic and socio-cultural stage at the time.

The first concocted emblem has already been noted above: this was the notion of 'development', centred on the aforementioned term *pembangunan* and its cognates. This formulation was situated squarely at the heart of virtually all New Order national campaigns and government crusades. Moreover, it was also this image which served as the basic rubric for the entire New Order cause—beneath the *pembangunan* umbrella Soeharto slowly constructed his own unique version of the nation-state paradigm, replete with 'family' and 'filial' connotations.

The second fabricated grouping consisted of discourse revolving round the interplay of two other state political clichés: *gotong royong* and *pancasila*—each bound to *pembangunan* rhetoric in its own unique manner. These two political clichés seem to have been aimed at distinctly separate socio-economic audiences: the first in order to restrain and domesticate poor *kampung* residents, the second in order to unite, coopt and corral middle-class to elite *kampung* as well as urban dwellers (cf. Sullivan :207). It will help us to look briefly at each of these in turn.

Of Sanskrit derivation and probably best translated 'the Five Principles',<sup>58</sup> the term *pancasila* has served as the Indonesian state creed since the country's formation as a nation-state (it seems to have been birthed in the cradle of *gotong royong* parlance,<sup>59</sup> cf. Sullivan :173). One of *pancasila*'s most alarming characteristics has been its lack of discernibly consistent content: while initially

---

<sup>58</sup>These principles are more or less as follows: (1) belief in one supreme being, (2) a just and civilized humanitarianism, (3) national unity, (4) wise government based upon consultation and consensus, and (5) social justice for all.

<sup>59</sup>We will take a look at *gotong royong* just below.



seeming to say much (being, in Geertz' words, 'short, ambiguous, and impeccably high-minded' [1973:225]), in the end it has rung hollow, sounded vague and been formulated essentially amorphous. In short, it has possessed no tonal centre, a fact rendering it incredibly susceptible to manipulation. On the New Order's interpretation, the primary onus seemed to be upon what was disallowed more than what was permitted or encouraged (Mackie and MacIntyre :26).

As a result, a dazzling array of symbolism and Indonesian history has swirled round this word, making it at once incredibly intriguing as well as dangerously slippery. Yet (or perhaps *consequently*), it served as a veritable litmus test of loyalty for Soeharto's New Order government.<sup>60</sup> For example, the 'unique Indonesian brand of democracy' championed by the New Order was given the curious designation 'Demokrasi Pancasila' ('Pancasila Democracy').<sup>61</sup> As Soeharto put it: 'we have to

---

<sup>60</sup>Geertz (1973) claims that such pernicious, manipulative obfuscation of the concept was already evident as early as the late stages of Soekarno's tenure: 'By the time of the Constitutional Convention of 1957, the Pantjasila had changed from a language of consensus to a vocabulary of abuse, as each faction used it more to express its irreconcilable opposition to other factions than its underlying rules-of-the-game agreement with them, and the Convention, ideological pluralism, and constitutional democracy collapsed in a single heap' (:226).

The difference at the time, however, was that everyone seemed to be capable of wielding the pancasila sword, not merely the government.

<sup>61</sup>Cf. a comment concerning Pancasila Democracy made by the very clever and politically astute (though probably administratively inept) Abdurrahman Wahid, who was then seated as head of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)—the largest Islamic organisation in the country—but who later became president of the country:

'Asked if the Pancasila democracy had failed, he [Abdurrahman Wahid] said, democracy if implemented the right way was nothing less than Pancasila democracy.

“‘I am a Pancasilaist,” he said referring to the state ideology, “my understanding about Pancasila democracy is a democracy which is truly based on Pancasila. This does not differs [*sic*] from democracy with no other word attached to it.”

'The trouble was that Pancasila democracy had become a slogan, he said, and as such everyone had his or her own perception of it.

“‘As I see it the term Pancasila democracy has become a victim of the different perceptions of those who practice it.

“‘If those practitioners want to curtail the practice of democracy and yet the term Pancasila is attached to it we should pity Pancasila,” he said' (*Jakarta Post* 1991b:1).

Gus Dur (the diminutive used nationally for Abdurrahman Wahid) made these statements several years ago in a political climate in which a toeing of the pancasila line was of the utmost

(continued...)

look ahead to enhance the application of democracy based on Pancasila that is in line with the progress we achieve in development in general' (cited in Schwarz :293).

Schwarz points out that, while this statement would surely clarify very little for the average Indonesian, it seems that what Soeharto had in mind was

...a communitarian form of government in which decisions are made by consensus in a nation conceived of as a family. Open confrontation is thought to be damaging to the welfare of the community, which is much more important than the interests of the individual family members. Soeharto contends that Pancasila democracy, infused by the 'family spirit', is the form of government most closely congruent with Indonesia's cultural traditions (:292).

This obviously fits well with the patronage system described above. It is also easy to see the way in which its 'family-oriented' nature parallels the rigid paternalism found in relation to pembangunan.<sup>62</sup> In the mingling of sacralised, family-steeped elements, the brandishing of Pancasila played a major glue-like role in holding the New Order structure together.

Many were the consequences of this. For instance, from 1978 until only just recently one of the principal ways in which the government put its spin on the Pancasila creed was by virtue of a two-week Pancasila indoctrination course (entitled *Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengalaman Pancasila* ['Pancasila Apprehension and Comprehension Guidance Courses], abbreviated P4) (Sullivan :203ff). P4 courses were offered in local public schools, for civil-service employees and even, whenever possible, for Indonesian university students studying abroad. While not technically mandatory, encouragement for participating knew no bounds, even to the point that

---

<sup>61</sup>(...continued)  
importance.

We'll have an opportunity to look at Gus Dur's thought more closely in Chapter Four.

<sup>62</sup>See page 31 ff.



‘all civil servants who wish to gain promotion or even travel overseas [had] to prove attendance...’ (Vatikiotis 1993:106).

Another key ingredient to pancasila machinations was the function of the military. For the duration of Soeharto’s rule, the armed forces was a major stakeholder in the pancasila campaign—primarily by way of its enshrinement in the notion of Pancasila Democracy referred to above. Under this banner the armed forces was beatified as the agent of *dwifungsi* (‘dual function’)—a creed giving the Indonesian military a rightful socio-political *cum* economic affairs role in everyday civil affairs, in addition to their more typical national security function (see, *inter alia*, Anderson 1990:115; Schwarz :16, 30; Vatikiotis 1993: 60-91; also, cf. Sundhaussen :67ff.).<sup>63</sup> Needless to say, the army (by far the largest and most influential of all the branches of the Indonesian military) has frequently confused the two capacities, sanctioning and securing its particular read on both the political climate as well as the economic arena.<sup>64</sup> Worse yet, *dwifungsi* has often placed the army in an adversarial role vis-à-vis average Indonesian citizens, thus poisoning the

---

<sup>63</sup>This doctrine is probably, in part, related to ABRI’s history. Recall that its birth came about rather spontaneously as a result of local guerilla opposition to Dutch forces attempting to reestablish dominance after the Second World War (see note 12 above).

Vatikiotis observes: ‘The Indonesian army sees itself as quite different from other armies in the world, because it was never created as an instrument of the state, but was itself involved in the creation of the state. Thus the military considers itself the embodiment of Indonesian nationalism. In theory, it remains above the state, and technically does not consider itself answerable to the government of the day, although in theory, the president is supreme commander of the armed forces. Abri’s decisive role in the defense of the Republic during the 1945-9 period, when it came under Dutch attack [*sic*] provided the military with the basic justification for wielding political power. “The government may change every day; the army remains the same,” General Sudirman, the army’s first and much revered commander, said in 1947’ (1993:63-64).

<sup>64</sup>This is all the more detrimental when considering the pervading presence of the military at both the local as well as the national level: ‘The military is entrenched and represented at the provincial level as well as at the political center. Military men sit in both the provincial and district parliaments, and often provide the speakers. Moreover, the positions of provincial governor and district officer, both semi-elective positions, often are held by military men’ (Sundhaussen :52).

former as the sole protector of 'orthodox' Pancasila canon in the face of clandestine opposition which, according to New Order doctrine, would always threaten to percolate up from the population at-large.<sup>65</sup>

Yet the most interesting aspect of Pancasila rhetoric can be found in the identity of its intended audience: the middle-class to elite Indonesian citizen. Before we look more closely at this, however, we must first unpack the accessory construct in the couplet: the notion of *gotong royong*.

Typically glossed 'mutual cooperation' or 'mutual assistance', *gotong royong* is 'an expression covering a familiar set of principles and practices and an elaborate inspirational discourse on neighbourliness' (Sullivan :71).<sup>66</sup> It may surprise some that, in opposition to a good deal of present day nation-state rhetoric, 'gotong royong discourse' is not some ancient conception of Indonesian good-neighbourliness, but instead it '...appears to have emerged since the 1940s as an ideology of community earnestly promoted by the state' (:4).<sup>67</sup> The reason for this fabrication, it seems, has

---

<sup>65</sup>For the Indonesian military since the New Order, Pancasila and its role as defined by *dwifungsi* has been linked directly to its identity as a counterfoil to the former Indonesian Communist Party (the PKI). 'Pancasila Sanctity Day' (*Hari Kesaktian Pancasila*), the name given to the day on which the crushing of the attempted 'communist' coup has been celebrated—1 October, the date in 1965 on which the bodies of six murdered generals were discovered in an abandoned well at the Halim Jakarta international airport—demonstrates the sacro-sanct nature of this role and the link it boasts to Pancasila. Since the downfall of the Soeharto regime on 21 May 1998, however, there have been repeated calls in the press for the rescinding of both the army's *dwifungsi* license as well as a discontinuation of the obsolete scapegoating of the now long-defunct PKI as source for all of Indonesia's social ills and political ferment. As examples of the first type of article, *vide Jakarta Post* 1998a; 1998b; 1998c; and 1998e. Examples of the second may be found in *Jakarta Post* 1998d; 1998f; and 1998g.

<sup>66</sup>Cf. Guinness who defines it as 'forms of balanced and generalised reciprocity among Javanese villagers' (:279).

<sup>67</sup>First-president Soekarno seems to have played an instrumental part in introducing this term to the Indonesian political stage. 'In his 1945 speech, after describing the five principles (*Pancasila*) he thought would constitute the *Weltanschauung* of the nation... Sukarno explained that these could be condensed into three (*tri sila*): social nationalism, social democracy, and belief in one God. He then proposed that this three could be compacted into one. "If I compress what was five into three,

(continued...)



been both a need to maintain tranquil communities which do not hinder government programmes, as well as a desire to marshal voluntary labour necessary for village level government projects—ones organised top-down and, thus, in need only of being implemented.<sup>68</sup>

John Sullivan employs the phrase ‘invented community’ to illustrate the New Order’s hoped for results at the local village level.<sup>69</sup> He emphasises the top-down, fabricated image of local harmonious kampung communities, all held together by an elaborate village control mechanism (i.e., the RT/RW system;<sup>70</sup> a structure charged with delineating the scope for domestication of poor kampung dwellers—cf. Sullivan 1987:135). Thus, there was an *invented* quality to the configuration. For Soeharto’s New Order administration, the village served as the *locus classicus* in which gotong royong—the ‘invented construct’ *par excellence*—enjoyed its lease on life (1987:212). The reason, says Sullivan, is that the goal was to keep local kampung life ticking along in as orderly and non-disruptive a fashion as possible so as not to derail wider,

---

<sup>67</sup>(...continued)

and what was three into one, then I have a genuine Indonesian term, *gotong royong*, mutual cooperation. The state of Indonesia which we are to establish must be a *gotong royong* state. Is that not something marvelous: a *Gotong Rojong* state!” (Sullivan :173).

For an abridged version of this speech, see Sukarno 1969.

<sup>68</sup>“‘Mutual help’ (gotong royong) programmes are organized top-down and it is those who suffer most who are expected to contribute their “free” labour which they first of all need to struggle for their living, there being nothing “democratic” in the condition of most villages’ (Mulder 1987:98). In relation to top-down development models extant in West Java, see Hardjono 1983.

<sup>69</sup>‘Invented community’ is a term Sullivan borrows from Hobsbawm and Ranger (1989). Juxtaposed against this is *pancasila*, best viewed as the key symbol for Indonesia’s ‘imagined community’ discourse—that omni-present nation-state rhetoric spoken of by Anderson (1991; cf. Sullivan 1987:208). See just below on page 48.

<sup>70</sup>RT is short for *Rukun Tetangga* (woodenly translated: ‘Neighbourhood Conviviality Unit’), RW for *Rukun Warga* (‘Citizenship Conviviality Unit’). From smallest to larger, these are the two lowest tiers of Indonesian governmental structure—in actuality more quasi-governmental in nature (administrative heads for these units are not officially on the government payroll). See Sullivan 1987:134-160.

more grandiose images of the pembangunan formula. This introduces us to the second, more elevated stratum.

In contrast to domesticating gotong royong discourse centred on poor villagers, Sullivan claims that the Pancasila formula was the key symbol for the New Order's 'imagined community' nation-state rhetoric (1987:208; cf. Ariel Heryanto 1988:11; 21-22) aimed at coopting elite kampung (and urban) dwellers by enticing them through kick-backs from the state. Benedict Anderson's nation-state 'imagined community' thesis (1991) becomes important at this point, since he points out that '...the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (:6; cf. Sullivan 1987:189-191 [esp. 191]; 207-208).<sup>71</sup> Thus through Pancasila discourse the idea was to get Indonesia's elite 'imagining' (and craving) in the same direction, staking their respective claims on chances of gaining ever-greater slices of the limited nation-state bounty (recall Anderson's depiction of the finite nature of indigenous understandings of power). The result was elite citizens in direct competition with each other in the national communion.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup>Sullivan makes much of Anderson's 'imagined community' thesis in his analysis.

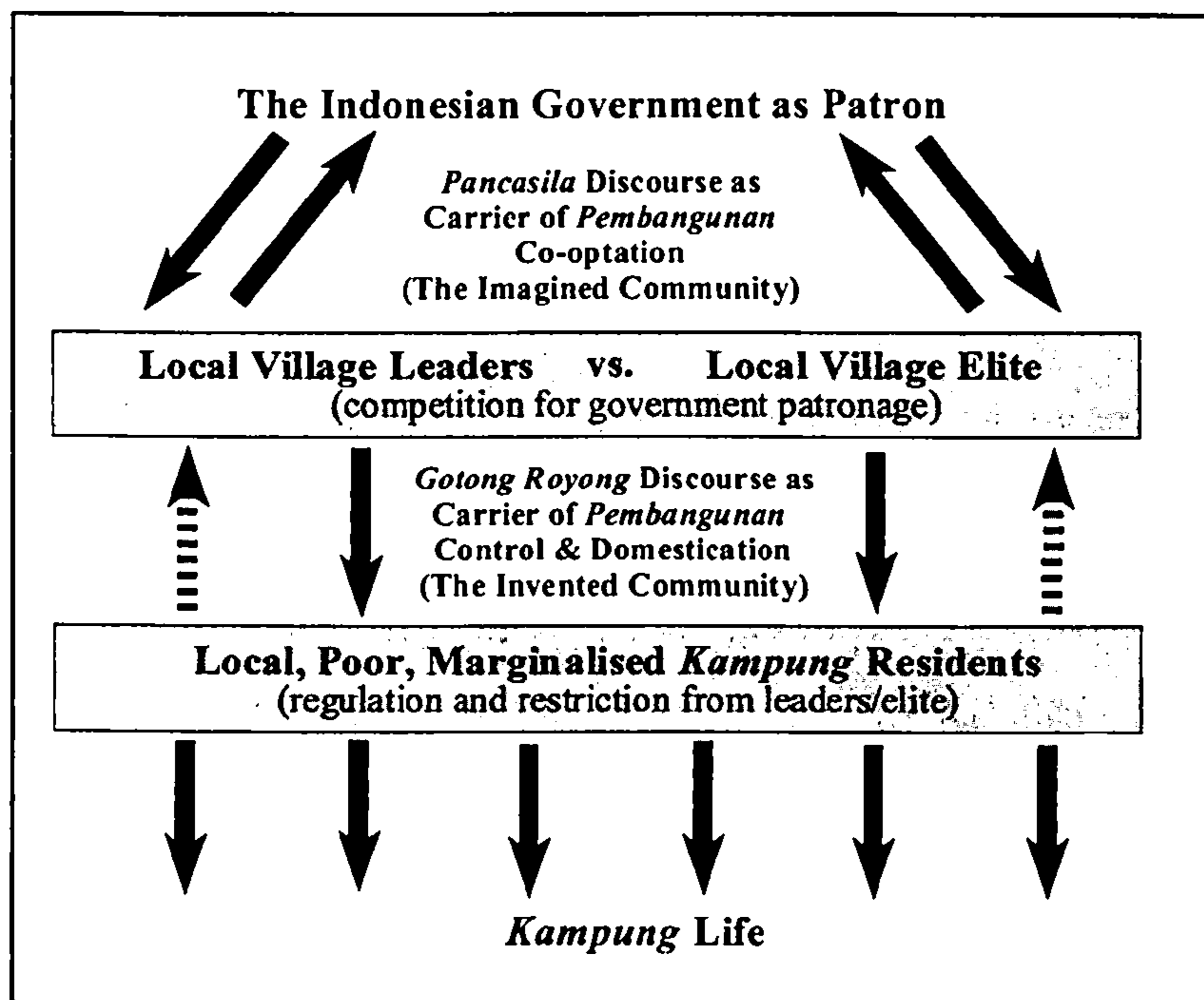
<sup>72</sup>Jackson has linked the sort of political style I am describing here with Thai specialist Fred Riggs' concept of 'bureaucratic polity' (see Riggs 1966). In such an arrangement, says Jackson, 'the main arena for political competition is not the country at large, and power is not obtained through the cultivation of mass movements. Instead, meaningful power is obtained through interpersonal competition in the elite circle in closest physical proximity to the president. Elections are held to legitimize, through democratic symbolism, the power arrangements already determined by competing elite circles in Jakarta (1978a:5). Riggs' thesis has probably been most forcefully critiqued by Anek Laothamatas (1992). It is hard to overlook the similarity of what prevailed in Indonesia under Soeharto and some form of the 'bureaucratic polity' thesis, however it might need to be amended, adapted and critiqued.

In a similar vein, note the following in 1991 from Indonesia's national daily *Kompas*: 'Participation of the general populace in the development of politics is limited solely to casting a ballot, since after this, one witnesses not only the weakening of participation, but not infrequently a widely embraced view of politics as something "taboo".' (:1) [*Partisipasi rakyat dalam*

(continued...)



With the above analysis in tow, we may now return to our earlier diagram which depicted **Traditional *Kampung* Patronage**. We are clearly in a position to redraw it in order that it might more accurately reflect the revised hierarchical rearrangement just identified. Traditional hierarchical power alignments seem to have been nationally folded into the above invented, imported and hackneyed groupings, resulting in a political mix ill fit for the needs of poor *kampung* residents like those in Karang Resik's Hakekat region. In short, during Soeharto's reign patronage was left lop-sidedly reconfigured to the extreme on the New Order stage, much to the detriment of poor residents.



### Reconfigured *Kampung* Patronage

<sup>72</sup>(...continued)

*pembangunan politik barulah terbatas pada keikutsertaan dalam pemilu. Karena setelah itu, bukan saja partisipasinya yang melemah, tetapi tidak jarang yang menganggap politik sebagai sesuatu yang "tabu" ]*.

As can be seen, the elite—formerly patrons of poor kampung residents—were fashioned by the New Order into a *nouveau* collection of clients designed to compete for access to the central state repository. With the state collectively taking up the position of patron, Soeharto, up to the point of his resignation, perched atop its peak as its symbolic quasi-sacred benefactor. Similar to traditional patronage, cooptation in this scheme had as its central aim the clustering of all possible rival factions under one umbrella; likewise, while the umbrella was trumpeted as solitary and singular (the umbrella stamped *pembangunan* or ‘development’), plainly those elite taking refuge below were anything but harmonised—as we have seen, competition, conflict and fractionalisation seemed baldly the hoped-for result.<sup>73</sup> This being the case, the accent by necessity emerged as a complex affixed to vertical lines of governmental authority reigning over competing factions—as opposed to an horizontal variety centred on *camaraderie*—with hopes that all potential threats from the elite to the prevailing New Order system would thereby be divided and, in the end, neutralised.

From the revised diagram we can see that, as an outgrowth of this formula, poor kampung dwellers were entirely differentiated from local village leaders and elite by way of newly fortified *gotong royong* communities—the former no longer actually tethered to local leadership as before (Antlöv 1994:92). Each of the complexes—*pancasila* and *gotong royong*—became carriers of their respective *pembangunan* goals and purposes: (1) *pancasila* was focussed on aligning and coopting Indonesia’s elite for the state’s purposes by fostering rivalry between them in a clamber for New Order patronage; and (2) *gotong royong* was focussed on

---

<sup>73</sup>When glancing once again at the patron-client and traditional leadership thesis, such factionalisation of clients is to a large extent consistent with more traditional patronage systems as well. See Eisenstadt and Roniger 1981 and 1984.



controlling and domesticating the kampung's poor by way of New Order village-level regulation and restriction. As a consequence there arose a 'competition among the elite scrambling for scarce positional and material rewards', as Aleksius Jemadu has put it, resulting in a wide scale '...political marginalization of society' (1997:5).

Village elite were left with little time, interest or motivation to look after the needs of poor kampung dwellers as in days gone by. Thus, in our diagram, bold arrows of control (as opposed to requited patronage relationships, strictly speaking) issue from kampung elite down toward the marginalised, but only broken arrows of limited feedback (if any at all) flow the other way—very little reciprocity between these two groups now seems current in today's kampung, whether hierarchically-defined or not. Plainly stated, the village poor have simply been left out in the cold to fend for themselves, semi-detached outside the pembangunan orbit.<sup>74</sup>

The upshot of all of this is, Soeharto's pembangunan umbrella did not issue forth as an invitation for poor kampung residents to join the 'great development family' (*Keluarga Pembangunan Besar*) presided over by the nation's fatherly

---

<sup>74</sup>Within this process, however, might be a slow erosion of power previously enjoyed by the village elite—since, now detached from the poorer residents in the community in terms of give and take and dependency relationships, raw coercion is the only thing remaining, served up by the state in this arrangement. Local power holders no longer command obedience as they once did.

Scott (1985) seems to point to a similar decoupling in Malaysia of patronage bonds and their attendant obligations: '[Wealthy farmers now] face...the classic ideological contradiction of the transition to more capitalist forms of production. To the degree that the new production relations have prevailed, there is a corresponding decline in the social use of property and hence in the social authority of the propertied class.

'The net result of the process has been that the large farmers and landlords affiliated with the ruling UMNO party have been losing their social grip on the poor. In the past, UMNO's political control of the countryside was predicated squarely on the social control that wealthier families could exercise over small-holders by virtue of relations of economic dependence, particularly tenancy and employment. It was enough for UMNO to attach to itself a large share of the wealthier villagers; their economic dependents were brought along as a matter of course. As the "organic" dependence of production relations has come unraveled, as profit has steadily detached from social control over poorer villagers, these economic networks of local authority have become far more tenuous. They have not disappeared altogether but have become less numerous and less reliable. Those economic relations of dependence that remain, moreover, are now often organized more strictly by impersonal market forces...so as to yield far less in terms of systemic social subordination' (:311).

patron (*Bapak*). On the contrary, what they were subjected to was outside, hierarchical control with a view toward their domestication (cf. Sullivan 1987:207)—an undertaking of ‘national security and conflict management’ (1987:206) at the village level.<sup>75</sup> The reason for this is clear. If cooptation of the elite client class was the primary goal under pembangunan-inspired images of pancasila, then something had to be done with the resulting discarded underclass—those previously functioning as clients for the ones now coopted. Once again, this was achieved by means of pancasila’s sister pembangunan mantra: gotong royong—the tool of choice to ‘underwrite intervention into village life’ (John Bowen, as cited in Sullivan 1987:178).<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup>The [pancasila] picture contains everything the New Order rulers feel should and can be in a fully developed, modern Indonesian society. It outlines a community of the future to which all Indonesians with the entrance price are invited, part of the price (paid in advance) being their agreement that the foundations are firmly in place and the rest of the edifice is steadily developing, which agreement implies an eschewal of certain forms of behaviour likely to disrupt or slow this development, including impatient demands for premature reforms. It must be said that the picture is not entirely convincing and the invitation not all that compelling in itself, at least to *kampung* dwellers’ (Sullivan :207).

<sup>76</sup>Cf. Sullivan: ‘...It seems unlikely that *pancasila* is really meant to inspire lower-class groupings, unlikely that state ideologues care much whether the *wong cilik* [Javanese: ‘little people’] are moved by their picture of the good society. It is probably enough if they refrain from spoiling other people’s enjoyment of it and obey the simple rules evolving from it’ (1987:208).

Oddly enough, this locus of interest seems to have been lost on many outside political analysts of Indonesia. Frequently, the pancasila doctrine has been trumpeted as in full force throughout the nation due to the fact that many of the elite of the country (whether democrats or not) laud its merits. This can be seen in Douglas Ramage’s study who states that ‘...at first, like many others, I saw Pancasila as the uninteresting rhetoric of a government trying to legitimize its rule. Upon closer examination it became apparent that Pancasila has meaning for Indonesians far beyond stale government propaganda. It was also evident that Pancasila plays a central role in ongoing political debates’ (1995:ix). While this may or may not be true, it is instructive to note the sort of ‘closer examination’ which served to change Ramage’s mind: ‘...personal, one-on-one interviews with ninety-seven people[,],...most...members of the “elite”—both in and out of government’ (1995:ix-x).

It seems that almost the entirety of his book is based upon these interviews. Undoubtedly, if pancasila has functioned in the manner I have just described, Ramage’s approach could in no way capture the ‘meaning’ the emblem possessed for the vast majority of Indonesians—it could only do this in relation to the elite, those it was designed to coopt! Furthermore, this in no way debunks the role the construct took on as a primary tool of ‘rhetoric’ in the New Order’s attempt ‘...to legitimize its rule’.

In later chapters I will offer the incarnational approach which is far more robust in getting at the truth of the matter in terms of local opinions held and views embraced.



Once domineered and domesticated, these villagers thereafter found themselves collared as a virtual 'beast of burden' stratum, employed without explanation to do the grunt work of local village-level, nation-building chores as concocted by those in power—chores easily now labelled development (pembangunan). Furthermore, if found less than forthcoming vis-à-vis these new-found roles, poor kampung residents could be categorised as obstructive to pembangunan, rendered suspect as less than religiously zealous, labelled subversives, or, possibly the worst scenario, branded pro-communist<sup>77</sup>—all of this available by way of the State-framed gotong royong postulate. Consequently, these persons found themselves stigmatised, short of jobs and opportunities, wanting for traditional leadership structures as safeguards and shy of physical resources—in a word, they were left marginalised to the fringe (or, better yet, to the bottom) of kampung society as a by-product of the New Order's pembangunan/pancasila/gotong royong troika. This construct itself essayed to refashion the patron-client relationship into a tool for the realisation of its own predetermined goals. In the process, poor villagers were caught in a web of hierarchy—still at the bottom of the pile—but now with scarcely any power with which they could voice, let alone realise, their ambitions.

---

<sup>77</sup>Keeping in mind the climate prevailing at the time of Soeharto's ascendancy to power in 1965 and the crucial role that demonization of anything even remotely related to communism has played from that time forward.

*The Countervailing Symbolic Universe of Marginalised Residents in Karang Resik*

In some countries, the populations pretend to comply but, behind the scenes, there takes place a sort of subversion of the logic accompanying the imported object or institution. Etienne Le Roy aptly speaks of 'phagocytism', a term used in chemistry whereby one cell 'absorbs and destroys' another, and indeed one sometimes wonders who has actually absorbed whom (Verhelst 1990:41).

My own first-hand involvement in kampung life in Karang Resik came about over six years ago when I began meeting with Pak Ujang, a rice farmer, Pak Cece, a cigarette peddler, my research assistant Pak Tampan (who comes from the region and who was unemployed at the time) and Pak Agus, a local handy-man who was at the time serving as a *Ketua RT* (or Head of the RT<sup>78</sup>) in the region as well. The goal each night was to listen to Indonesian language broadcasts on the BBC and the occasional broadcast from Holland, Australia or the United States (all of these disseminated over short wave radio). They let me know that they had been meeting like this consistently over the course of several years—notwithstanding the threat it posed should they be found out—since they had little trust in the internal government-influenced Indonesian news programmes and they felt they needed to, as they themselves put it, 'know what was really happening.' I was invited to join in these sessions, ostensibly coming along simply to listen to the radio.<sup>79</sup> But these nights

---

<sup>78</sup>For a short description of the RT/RW system, see note 70 above.

<sup>79</sup>Once again, I first became interested in Karang Resik on account of the uprising I have described on page 11. Pak Ujang, Pak Cece, Pak Tampan and Pak Agus were all aware that this initial attraction to the region was for the purpose of research and they seemed to believe that joining them would help to deepen my knowledge of their area. Even so, initially getting to know Pak Tampan was extremely helpful (we met by way of a mutual friend outside the Karang Resik region during my early days in Tasikmalaya)—he essentially mid-wifed me into the fold of these men. All four also took me round the area and introduced me to key individuals and leaders, primarily in order to gain informal permission to nose about.



soon developed into full-scale discussion times. Much of what I learnt about kampung life I gleaned from these late-night conversations.<sup>80</sup>

It did not take me long to realise that poor kampung residents have been the victims of a virtual assault of historically-distorted symbols. They have felt full-force the impact of the reconfigured kampung patronage system described above. In Karang Resik, poor kampung dwellers are no longer seen as valued citizens and thus they are now left scrambling 'patronless' with their former patrons, the village elite, transformed into clients of the state. Semi-detached in their relationship to the pembangunan umbrella, the poor of Karang Resik have been forced to serve its image, with very little public say in what this should mean. And the village elite—now faithful clients under mandate from the national political configuration since 1965—are charged with the task of guarding the pembangunan image, goaded on by potential payback in the form of position and access to the centre.

But in what specific ways has pembangunan been guarded in Karang Resik and who specifically have the guardians been?

Firstly, simple topography provides some answers. Since 1989 the area has been divided into three distinct administrative districts (RWs); divisions which simply recognised in a late fashion conceptual partitions already in force in the area for quite some time. These divisions confine Hakekat residents to the middle, frequently making them both scapegoats and buffers at one and the same time. To the question 'Who, locally, guards the image of pembangunan?', the logical answer is 'Those in the NU and Persis regions'. A bridge traversing a stream conspicuously

---

<sup>80</sup>That below (or that above, for that matter) is not drawn simply from these late night discussions, but also from periodic day-time involvement in the area—in the form of interviewing, observing, participating and other normal 'culture-exploring' activities.

divides the NU region from Middle Region and it serves as a fairly strict boundary. An individual from Middle Region caught wandering into the NU region after dusk<sup>81</sup> is very likely to receive a sound thrashing from youth living in the NU area. The NU message has come to be: 'Remember where you are from and resist confusing the categories'.

Another obvious geographical indication of this rearrangement are the changes which have been made to the large recreation site which first gave the region its name.<sup>82</sup> Even the shape and location of the main entrance has now been altered—the former entrance shunted off to the side, leading nowhere except to a dead-end blocked by a gate into a large, private residence.<sup>83</sup> This, by itself, seems to signal the shift in focus, with guards stationed at the entrance and with admission for entry now being charged.<sup>84</sup> Even though the site lies within the confines of their region, Hakekat residents can no longer freely access the grounds as they once could—a fact especially ironic in light of the significance the place carries during the struggle for independence, a significance Hakekat ancestors were instrumental in establishing. This much is undeniable.

---

<sup>81</sup>The boundary between daylight and dusk is, incidentally, a time-boundary spiritually-laden with rarefied connotations all tied up in the prevailing conceptual framework of the more mystically-prone local residents; primarily those bearing allegiance to the NU faction as well as, of course, those from Middle Region—see Wessing 1978.

<sup>82</sup>In actual fact, the area where the recreation spot is found is the only place ever to officially bear the name Karang Resik. Nevertheless, popular reference throughout the city of Tasikmalaya has for some time pointed to the whole stretch depicted as rightfully deserving this appellation—a sort of reverse metonymy with the region taking its name from the recreation spot.

<sup>83</sup>I have already made reference to this fact above, in note 6.

<sup>84</sup>This does not even touch upon the event which attracted my attention to the area in the first place—the establishment of a pub on the grounds of the tourist site. I will look more closely at that incident below.



However, what may not be so easy to see is the impact all of this has had on local real estate costs—a phenomenon especially hard on Hakekat residents in light of their marginalisation. Remodelling of the site in the manner described has attracted wealthy speculators from outside Karang Resik who have begun buying up land around the recreation site with a view toward possible construction and ‘development’ in the future—of course, the government has called this process *pembangunan*.<sup>85</sup> The appearance of such people has been an obvious outgrowth of that described above; with the *pembangunan* structure in place, outside power-holders are left with free rein to enter as they will. In the region of Karang Resik itself it was rumoured, before Soeharto stepped down, that his eldest daughter, Tutut, had purchased a great deal of land and was planning to establish a golf course near the area. While I was not able to ascertain the veracity of this report, it was somewhat irrelevant in relation to the effect it had on land prices in the area. Being all too plausible, people believed it and this by itself had great impact on the local economy, with land prices soaring from Rp. 70,000 per bata<sup>86</sup> to a price generally hovering around Rp. 300,000—though at times it got as high as Rp. 500,000 per bata. If small rice plot farmers previously found it difficult to purchase land, it is surely next to impossible now.

The impossibility of becoming a land owner is not the only barrier to Middle Region residents. For example, over the past ten to fifteen years Pak Ujang has been relegated to a form of seignorialism, surrendering 50% of the yield from 300 bata of

---

<sup>85</sup>Ironically, in light of the physical building process to which these speculators are referring, in actual fact they are indeed correct in this case. See the discussion above concerning ‘construction’ connotations of the term *pembangunan*.

<sup>86</sup>A bata is 14 square metres.

paddy in almost corvée fashion to a wealthy, university-trained, outside landowner. Consequently, even under normal circumstances he has struggled to make ends meet. However, Pak Ujang is fully aware that he is now all the more subject to the whims of his absentee boss, since his boss could dismiss him at any time should he deem it economically expedient. Pak Ujang has no recourse in the face of this, since the owner lives far outside the community and is thus entirely indifferent to Pak Ujang's plight. There is no longer any social or communal pressure which can be brought to bear upon him.

At a less material level is the bifurcation of discourse in the Karang Resik region into the national language ('Bahasa Indonesia' or the Indonesian language) and a regional language ('Basa Sunda' or the Sundanese language). This division serves to further alienate the poor from discussions and conversation related to pembangunan, since such discourse inevitably takes place in the national language which is a medium many Karang Resik Middle Region residents feel less than comfortable using. Thus, importation of a foreign discourse into the region is yet another factor serving to marginalise these people. However, seeing as how language and the ability to name the world is such a huge determinant in controlling one's surroundings, this factor is more significant than is normally realised.

Pronouncements and materials issued by the government are inevitably circulated in the national language; in light of the country's ethnic complexity and the consequent assortment of regional languages, this is most understandable. Nevertheless, the variety of speech generally utilised for this function ranges from



the jargonised to the technical to Indonesianised loan-words<sup>87</sup> (generally borrowed from English), all of which the poor find extremely difficult to understand. As patron to the country's population, the government becomes the steward of meaning—with pembangunan cast as a most scientific process only truly understood by government personnel. Taufik Abdullah sheds light on the process for us.

The development of scientific and technological knowledge, accompanied by the dissemination of—by way of a variety of avenues—extreme forms of specialisation and professionalism, can be seen as one of the 'factors of fragmentation' when it comes to language integrity. The proponents of these sorts of social developments become established in exclusive communities, not simply in their own field of specialty, but also in relation to more general communication systems. The increase and enlargement of our information treasury (what is often termed our *body of knowledge* [sic]), in relation to a variety of natural, social and human phenomena, frequently brings about the necessity of transforming a 'word' into a 'term', which thereafter represents an idea mechanism. When this transformation takes place, the relationship between the meaning 'already agreed upon' in the original community of discourse and the word itself is fractured. The concept is no longer one which can be agreed upon in light of *sense* [arti]—as recorded in a dictionary—but it is now a process in which the *meaning* [makna] must be concocted and, if necessary, debated. When one goes to use this 'word become term'—seeing as how it must by this fact possess only one principal *meaning*—it appears that not only is the multifarious sense that such a word has when used in a thriving community rendered nonfunctional, but the word itself is now no longer understood at all by the wider community. 'Power', 'authority', 'strength', or whatever else all end up saddled with a meaning most strange in the event they are employed as concepts in an academic discourse centring on political science or sociology, for instance (Taufik Abdullah 1996:352).<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup>i.e., *inovasi, partisipasi, orientasi, studi, bujet* (for 'budget'), *implementasi, ekonomi, epistemologi, fenomena*, etc. While the meaning of these words may seem obvious to us, since they bear clear affinity to rather common English words, their connotation is easily lost on Hakekat residents who have little command of the English language.

<sup>88</sup>*Perkembangan ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi serta pelebaran spesialisasi dan profesionalisasi dari berbagai cabang kegiatan secara ekstrem bisa dilihat sebagai salah satu faktor "pemecah" kesatuan bahasa. Para pendukung dari setiap peristiwa sosial ini membentuk komunitasnya eksklusif, tidak saja dalam keahlian, tetapi juga dalam sistem komunikasi.*

(continued...)

Such is the case with pembangunan and the other terms which spin about it; as advocated by the government, they all sound ever so strange to the average poor kampung person from Karang Resik.

Clarification is in order at this point. It would be mistaken to imply that the people in Middle Region do not speak Indonesian; indeed, they do. But it is not their heart language and a topic this great in significance, related to their economic and political destinies, is surely a matter of the heart. Since these people are not fully fluent in the language of such a dialogue, they end up at a distinct disadvantage. After all, what sort of an Indonesian likes to confess difficulty with the national *lingua franca* of Indonesia? All the same, Pak Cece made such a confession to me once: 'I can speak the Indonesian language, that's not the problem' he said. 'It's just that when I do, it's like being on a road that has not yet been paved.'<sup>89</sup>

The type of language used by the Karang Resik elite upon poor Middle Region residents keeps the latter in their place—labelling them and thus stigmatising them as persons not to be trusted. So aware are Middle Region folk of this process

---

<sup>88</sup>(...continued)

*Penambahan dan pembesaran perbendaharaan [sic] pengetahuan atau body of knowledge, tentang berbagai gejala alam, sosial, dan kemanusiaan, kerap menimbulkan keharusan perubahan "kata" menjadi "istilah" atau "konsep", yang mewakili seperangkat ide. Ketika perubahan ini terjadi, maka terputuslah hubungan kata dengan artinya yang semula "telah disetujui" oleh komunitas penutur bahasa. Konsep bukan lagi yang bisa ditentukan artinya, sebagaimana tertera dalam kamus, tetapi sesuatu yang maknanya harus dirumuskan dan, kalau perlu, diperdebatkan. Ketika keharusan akan adanya makna tunggal dari sebuah "kata yang telah dijadikan konsep" ingin diterapkan, maka bukan saja arti majemuk yang biasanya mengiringi sebuah kata di kalangan masyarakat ramai menjadi tak berfungsi, kata itu sendiri tak bisa lagi dimengerti oleh masyarakat luas. "Kekuasaan", "wewenang", "kekuatan" dan entah apa lagi telah mempunyai makna yang aneh, kalau telah dipakai sebagai konsep dalam wacana akademis ilmu politik atau sosiologi, umpamanya.'*

<sup>89</sup>'Bisa bahasa Indonesia; bukan itu masalahnya. Tapi, kalau dipakai, kaya jalan yang belum diaspal.'

In the Indonesian language as well as in Sundanese, the word for 'fluent' is *lancar*, a term which can also be glossed 'smooth' in the English language. Thus, the analogy between fluency in speaking and smoothness of road is a vivid one for the Indonesian.



that they have their own designation for it: they call it *ditulis tonggong*: 'written on their backs'. We might say 'branded'.

There are at least two ways in which Middle Region residents have been controlled by way of language. First, as alluded to above, *Bahasa Indonesia* has become circumscribed with a host of rules conceived at the centre (in keeping with *pembangunan dictum*), ordaining to those at the periphery what is 'right and proper use'.

Touching upon the right and proper use of the Indonesian language, [President Soeharto] shared his concern that this language—with such a unifying quality—is actually not being treated as it should.

'Lately there have been worrying signs in relation to the utilisation of the Indonesian language. In light of this, I would like to repeat the appeal I made in my State Address on 16 August 1972: let us all make a concerted effort to employ the Indonesian language in a right and proper manner,' urged the President.

He reminded the people that an orderly use of language corresponds to a style of thinking and behaviour which is also orderly.

'The Indonesian language is one of the components of the Youth Pledge [*Sumpah Pemuda*] which forged us together as a nation. We are proud that the Indonesian language has shown such a good deal of growth and development. It is now not just a language for socialising but it has also grown to become a language of formality, even a language of science,' said the President (*Pikiran Rakyat* 1995:1).<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup>*Ketika menyinggung penggunaan Bahasa Indonesia yang baik dan benar, Presiden menyampaikan rasa keprihatinannya karena bahasa persatuan ini telah dipakai secara tidak sebagaimana mestinya.*

*"Akhir-akhir ini ada tanda-tanda yang merisaukan dalam penggunaan Bahasa Indonesia. Karena itulah, saya ingin mengulangi lagi ajakan yang saya sampaikan melalui Pidato Kengaraan tanggal 16 Agustus 1972. Marilah kita menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia yang benar dan baik," kata Presiden.*

*'Kepada masyarakat diingatkan bahwa penggunaan bahasa yang tertib menunjukkan cara berpikir dan bertindak yang tertib.*

*"Bahasa Indonesia adalah salah satu unsur Sumpah Pemuda yang mempersatukan kita sebagai bangsa. Kita bangga, bahwa Bahasa Indonesia itu telah tumbuh dan berkembang. Bahasa Indonesia bukan hanya menjadi bahasa pergaulan tapi sudah menjadi bahasa resmi, malahan bahasa ilmu pengetahuan," kata Presiden.'*

In May 1995 the government issued a strong recommendation that all 'foreign' terms found on signs, billboards, etc. should be replaced with those '*asli Indonesia*'; 'originally Indonesian.' Not

(continued...)

With poor kampung dwellers such as Pak Cece already feeling their linguistic prowess in the language 'less than paved', this edict from on high further puts them in their place. The purpose served by gotong royong, i.e., control, clearly has been buttressed even further by this sort of function of language—all wrapped in nationalistic garb.<sup>91</sup>

To exclude poor kampung residents from fluency in a conversation concerning the nature of pembangunan and what it should look like is to exclude them from participation. But, of course, given the existence of the pembangunan construct, Pancasila and the true nature of gotong royong discourse, this has been their lot in the reconfigured patronage system for quite some time now—participation is not something they have come to expect from the system anyway.

As a result, we now come to the second way in which language is used to keep Middle Region residents in check—namely, the wielding of speech or terminology (irreligious as well as religious) against them as a tool of control and constraint. In order to more clearly understand this, we need to back away from the local context a bit in order to gain a broader picture.

---

<sup>90</sup>(...continued)

only does this reflect an exceptionally naive view of philology and what counts as an original term in any language (one thinks of English—what *is* an original English term?), but it also struck me as both sad and humorous at the same time to peddle a bicycle around the fishing village *cum* tourist spot *Pangandaran* just after this edict was issued and take note of all the duct tape stuck sloppily across 'foreign' terms (such as 'restaurant' or 'hotel') by local government officials. This created a horrendous eyesore, not to mention the fact that one could generally see through the rather transparent duct tape available in Indonesia—rendering the effort useless anyway. Cf. Soeharmono Tjitrosoewarno 1995:8.

<sup>91</sup>The central government in Jakarta has even gone as far as to maintain a 'Language Development and Promotion Centre' (*Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa* or P3B). According to Ariel Heryanto (1996), during its heyday it served as the 'security police of language' (*polkam bahasa* or *polisi keamanan bahasa*) in Indonesia.



The primary difference—both nationally as well as locally—dividing Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)<sup>92</sup> from Persatuan Islam (Persis)<sup>93</sup> seems to centre on how these two communities understand the interpretation of the Qur'an. Those from the Persis<sup>94</sup> faction—who focus upon attempts to purify Islam of undue Western influence ('innovation' [*bid'a*]) and return to an earlier, purer faith—view scripture as open to academic deliberation and interpretation. In short, for Persis members, the gate or door to personal interpretation (*ijtihād*) is still open.<sup>95</sup>

On the other hand, the constituency of Nahdlatul Ulama—who follow the *Al-Shafi'i* Islamic legal school—see the *ijtihād*' gate as essentially closed (resulting in a focus on *taqlid* [often glossed 'blind obedience' in English] and an accompanying submission to prescribed traditional form and function).

The point had been reached when the scholars of all [the Sunnī] schools felt that all essential questions had been thoroughly discussed

---

<sup>92</sup>While Kyai Haji Hasjim Asjari (the grandfather of Abdurrahman Wahid, Indonesia's fourth president) officially founded Nahdlatul Ulama in 1926, its constituency had previously functioned *de facto* for many decades, perhaps even for centuries.

'The tradition of religious studies adhered to by NU,— [sic] relies on the original concept what is referred to in NU as *aqidah ahlussunnah waljama'ah*. This doctrine is based on the following essential points: adhering to the *tauhid* (oneness of God) concept or view of Al-Asy'ari and Al-Maturidi (which states that there is but one God and recognizes the messenger Muhammad) — Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i and Hambali and following the ways and orders established by Al-Junaid Al-Baghdadi. Unlike the views of other groups such as the Muhammadiyah and Persis (both of which only accept the Al-Asy'ari scholasticism as the basis for their Sunni faith), the NU in developing the tradition of complete religious study has divided the life cycle of its adherents into a number of circles of activities or standard interests' (Abdurrahman Wahid 1987:178).

<sup>93</sup>Founded in Bandung (thus, only three hours northwest of Tasikmalaya) on 12 September 1923, the centre of the Persis organisation can now be found in East Java (Surabaya). However, just a few years ago its newly-elected leader was chosen from Pesantren Benda in Tasikmalaya—the same training centre which serves as the locus of allegiance for Persis residents who have shifted to the Karang Resik region. For a brief history of Persis, see Feener 1999:35ff. For a more elaborate look at the organisation, see Federspiel 1970.

<sup>94</sup>These folk are, incidentally, relative late comers upon the Karang Resik scene—having trickled in to the region over time beginning just after the cataclysmic shift in power in 1965.

<sup>95</sup>A much closer examination of *ijtihād*' and the different opinions which prevail within the Indonesian Muslim community surrounding its rightful function can be found in Chapter Five.

and finally settled, and a consensus gradually established itself to the effect that from that time onwards no one might be deemed to have the necessary qualifications for independent reasoning in law, and that all future activity would have to be confined to the explanation, application, and, at the most, interpretation of the doctrine as it had been laid down once and for all. This 'closing of the door of *ijtihad*', as it was called, amounted to a demand for *taqlid*, a term which . . . now came to mean the unquestioning acceptance of the doctrine of established schools and authorities (Schacht 1979:70f.)

Furthermore, Nahdlatul Ulama has historically embraced more syncretistic, traditionally Javanese cultural practices abhorred by Persis; i.e. *inter alia*, the use of the *bedug* (a large drum found at the entrance to most NU mosques, resulting in an addition to the call to prayer beckoning worshipers five times a day), a less exact reckoning of the *kiblat* (direction for prayer) which Persis adherents take as being not sufficiently aligned with the location of Mecca and the practice of *tahlilan* or community night-long chanting sessions held at spiritually propitious times (primarily in relation to chronological life-cycle rituals at and after the death of a community member, rites which participants deem spiritually obligatory).

Despite these differences, one thing remains constant: representatives from both communities in Karang Resik feel themselves to be more religious, more pious and manifestly superior to residents from Middle Region. Fundamentally, this can be viewed as springing from the fact that both groups have historically thrown up resistance to the Middle Region's more syncretistically-steeped world view.

Middle Region residents tend to distill authentic religious fervour into what they see as its bare essence; i.e., into a more Sufistically-oriented, folk Islamic Hakekat or core, which puts little stock in ritual form and a good deal of stock in esoteric knowledge and belief. In sum, families residing in the region have come to embrace a variety of Islam which is combined with local spiritist beliefs—the



development of which took place at the same time as the ascendancy of NU just to its west. The mixture is said to have been brought from Central Java by a man called Eyang Lamsari, purportedly a faith-healer of great renown hailing from Central Java. Hakekat residents say that this man derived powers by way of his considerable ability to concentrate during spiritual meditation, as well as from his diligence in actuating teachings based upon the Jayabaya prophecy.<sup>96</sup> Middle Region residents also believe Eyang Lamsari augmented his sibylline abilities by meditating upon the works of a variety of Javanese mystics, the most celebrated being Ranggawarsita, the famed 19th-century Javanese court poet who, in the *Serat Wali Sanga*, related the mystical exploits of the nine quasi-mythical first missionaries of Islam to Java (known in Indonesia as the *Wali Sanga*) (see Koentjaraningrat 1985:330). Much of Ranggawarsita's writings have long been linked with Javanese mysticism, sufism and an ability to attain union with the divine (Frans Magnis-Suseno 1996:120-122).

Present-day Hakekat residents tell how their forebears witnessed amazing displays of supernatural power performed by Eyang Lamsari. In their opinion, it was this power—coupled with his manifest humility and integrity of life—which attracted the loyalty of the vast majority of their region's residents. In the end, Eyang

---

<sup>96</sup>In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries...a peculiar kind of Messianic text, *Prelambang Jayabaya*, appeared [in Java], which included prophecies of a future kingdom, ruled by a king named Jayabaya' (Koentjaraningrat 1985:335-336). This text centred on the centuries-old traditional *Ratu Adil* ('Divine King') prophecy, which foretold of a coming messianic figure who, upon his appearance, would bring order and justice to the world (1985:335). '[The *Ratu Adil*] is a prince who has practised asceticism and who therefore has received the *wahyu* (divine message from God to accept the responsibility for setting right all that has gone wrong, and restoring a just and prosperous society)' (1985:336).

It seems that the historical Jayabaya was actually a twelfth-century Javanese king from the region of Kediri. The connection between the historical, twelfth-century figure and the mystical figure appearing much later in *Prelambang Jayabaya* is uncertain (see Koentjaraningrat 1985:432, n. 51).

Lamsari's variety of sophisticated spirituality took deep root throughout the whole of the central division, being conveyed by way of informal guru-student teaching relationships, i.e., patron-client relationships.

The result was a pervasive mystical take on life on the part of Hakekat region residents, something which extended to the minutiae of daily life. As an example, Pak Agus once described to me the life goals he and his colleagues saw as authentically spiritual—ones he typified as 'cold' or 'cool' (Sunda: *tiis*).

Those originally from the Middle Region aspire to 'coolness'; too much effort—no!; too much of a quest for worldly success, don't! The challenge is for a plate of food each day or for three days—that's understandable. We do not wish for large rice fields, an automobile; it's not that we do not want these things, but we wish to study to be 'cool', calm, 'enough is enough'. If we do not have anything to do, true, that bothers us since then we have nothing to rely upon. If one views our work from a salary perspective alone, surely we are not satisfied—we have not yet realised all we wish for. However, if we achieve a little today, a little tomorrow, our efforts feel 'cool'; thus, we want this 'cool'. It is not that we do not wish to work hard. It is just that, by now, our bodily energy has begun to fade and our mental capacity is less than it used to be—to the point that, in the end, we are truly 'cooled down'.<sup>97</sup>

Over time, the widely divergent perspectives embraced by the different communities of Karang Resik came to be reflected in the geographical breakdown of the area—mental categories already widely embraced prior to their governmental recognition in 1989. Thus, even before Persis adherents began moving into the region the zone had been divided into two broad segments: (1) the NU region

---

<sup>97</sup>'Orang Gunung Tanjung Tengah aslih inginnya tiis/dingin, terlalu capek jangan, terlalu mengejar keduniaan jangan. Permasalahan makan untuk sehari-hari, mendapatkan yang bagus sehari atau tiga hari itu wajar cuma jangan kekurangan, jangan terlalu capek, ingin ketegangan bukan tidak mau sawah yang luas, punya mobil, bukan tidak ingin tapi ingin belajar tiis, tenang, cukup-lah, kalau tidak punya usaha akan sangat kebingungan tidak punya pegangan. Usaha kalau dilihat dari penghasilan akan jauh dari kecukupan kalau ingin menjangkaunya tidak akan sampai tapi dikasih sedikit-sedikit pun usaha terasa tiis/ dingin, jadi ingin tiis/ dingin, bukan tidak ingin kerja keras pertama karena tenaga sudah berkurang kemudian pikiran sudah kurang mampu, sehingga kemudian ditiiskeun.'



consisting of the northern and the southern portions—the NU and Persis sections at present, and (2) the central region, where the afore described mystical world view and folk version of Islam was espoused. This long-standing segmentation has added greatly to a feeling of disdain on the part of local NU-aligned Islamic religious leaders towards residents from the Hakekat division. From at least the beginning of the New Order, such animosity has also been aligned with NU and Persis residents' ability to stigmatise Middle Region kampung residents (owing to communist and leftist scape goating), resulting in a marginalisation and domestication of the latter and their communities.

One of the tools for domestication utilised over the years by NU and Persis residents has been a manipulation of vernacular speech involving the local regional language (Sundanese). An example can be found in the Sunda term 'mikung'. At face value, the word refers to a particular genus of grasshopper-like insect—the wider, more all-inclusive category is 'jangkrik' or 'kasir'. Distinctive characteristics for mikung are (1) they cannot fly since they have no wings and (2) they do not make noise like other 'jangkrik' or 'kasir'. They are mute. Young boys in West Java frequently enjoy digging in rice fields in search of jangkrik in order that they might place them in jars—primarily for the noise these make—or tie strings round them and let them fly on a kind of lead. However, mikung nests look very similar to jangkrik nests—in fact, I am told they are often bigger and more deeply burrowed into the ground, making them more difficult to get to. Thus, digging for a jangkrik but winding up with a mikung is a disappointment for a child, one they can scarcely avoid since the two creatures appear so similar on the surface.

The more scripturally-aligned residents of Karang Resik have long referred to Hakekat residents as *mikung*, commenting that these persons *look like* Muslims but, in fact, they are not—like *mikung*, they imply, Hakekat residents cannot fly nor should they have voice in the community. Like *mikung*, they are not authentic Muslims.<sup>98</sup>

Middle Region residents take great exception to this. They find it especially ironic since persons, who in times past were historically tied to Dar'ul Islam, are now bold enough to label as 'counterfeit' the progeny of residents who undeniably were the most devoted to both the area and the nation in times gone by. But Hakekat residents can publically do little about this now—since NU and Persis adherents are generally in charge of *gotong royong* projects and events. In my own research in Karang Resik, one Middle Region resident voiced the opinion that when it comes to the term *gotong royong*, 'the big guy employs it, the little guy carries it out.'<sup>99</sup>

The hollowness of the *gotong royong* rhetoric is not lost on Hakekat residents. In unguarded moments on the part of several Hakekat persons I spoke with in Karang Resik, I ran into a good deal of disdain for the outworkings of the idea. 'gotong royong?' one responded, in a tone of misgiving. 'Yea right. What they mean is "gotong royong"-ed!!'<sup>100</sup> Thus, many from the Middle Region feel less

---

<sup>98</sup>Even Sundanese dictionaries list both zoological as well as metaphorical definitions: '*mikung*, 1. not yet adult, not yet having wings (grasshoppers, etc.); 2. false or deviating from genuine teaching' (Budi Rahayu Tamsyah 1996:170, my translation of that below).

[*mikung*, 1. belum dewasa, belum bersayap (cengkerik, dsb.); 2. palsu atau menyimpang dari ajaran yang benar.]

<sup>99</sup>'Orang besar pakai, si kecil mengerjakan.'

<sup>100</sup>'Gotong royong? Masa. Maksudnya, di-gotong royong-kan!!'



a part of gotong royong than they feel 'gotong royong'-ed, certainly because they realise, perhaps intuitively, the inherent controlling nature of the concept.<sup>101</sup>

The religious aura this invented symbol has taken on in Karang Resik makes it even more a force to be reckoned with. Since the Middle Region has been historically linked by other Karang Resik residents to communism (and thus to atheism) and since the mystical variety of religion historically embraced by Middle Region residents has never fully aligned with the scruples of either NU or Persis adherents, the overt linking of religious observance (as defined by NU and Persis residents) to the ostensibly secular gotong royong has not proved difficult. This is illustrated in Karang Resik by the influence enjoyed by one particular NU-based resident, Pak Uus, who prides himself on being faithful to Islamic teaching. Virtually everyone with whom I spoke identified Pak Uus as having formerly entertained sympathies for Dar'ul Islam and perhaps even as having participated fully as an active member during its heyday. Furthermore, he almost assuredly helped identify several Middle Region kampung residents as communists or communist sympathizers in 1965-66, resulting in their being sent to Dar'ul Islam Island.

Pak Uus wields a great deal of power in the area, even today. For instance, an older member of Middle Region, Pak Ikin—an elderly resident who spent nine years on Buru island—spoke this way about Uus's continued sway:

It even got to where I was summoned by Uus. He wanted to know how it could be that Megawati's party could have won in our area. He said that he didn't like the fact that we took party allegiance and religion and made it one. I answered that amongst us there were

---

<sup>101</sup>Remember that *control of kampung dwellers* is the cardinal element of the gotong royong constellation.

indeed those like that, since in West Java there is a place for Hakekat while in Central Java it is known as *kejawen*. And even if one watches television one can see that a pulpit is there for preaching mystical religious beliefs. If we respond to this in anger, it will undoubtedly keep people from admitting that they are outside of Islam; but to me the most important thing is the Hakekat—in this way one's daily life can be brought into alignment with Islam.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, conflict seems almost structurally assured, with most Middle Region residents conceiving of Islam as mystically fulfilled and adhered to (with little space for the technicalities of law), and Pak Uus and his cohorts placing considerable emphasis on the code and one's obedience to it. Yet this is far from a simple stand-off equitably in balance. With discrepancies in local power, Pak Cece, Pak Ujang, Pak Agus and others from Middle Region remain sufficiently frightened of Pak Uus—they will hazard talking ill of him behind his back, but they will by no means confront him face-to-face. They still relate how they have often seen him grab Middle Region persons by the ear and pull them along beside him like children. Similar to the despotic 'fatherly' image of Soeharto at the national level, Pak Uus is the one in Karang Resik who is feared and obeyed—Soeharto in miniature!

A key method Pak Uus has used to keep Hakekat kampung residents in check is by gauging their local community spirit according to official religious participation and mosque attendance. For Pak Uus, not turning up to such events is tantamount to a lack of community-mindedness. In this way gotong royong now comes to mean, not community social-mindedness, but instead the rate of one's level of attendance at weekly Friday prayers and community *pangajian* events (*Qur'anic*

---

<sup>102</sup>'*Saya sampai dipanggil. katanya apa sebabnya kemenangan partai merah itu. Orang itu mempermasalahkan partai dan agama menjadi satu, saya bilang di kita ini memang ada kalau di Jawa Barat Hakekat, kalau di Jawa Tengah kejawen atau kalau kita lihat di tv ada mimbar kepercayaan, kalau kita marahi semua tidak akan mau disebut diluar Islam, yang penting sekarang itu hakekatnya, kehidupan sehari-hari sesuaikan dengan Islam.'*



recitations)—a problem indeed since many from the Middle Region find the power disparity at these events so palpable that they simply cannot bring themselves to go. Pak Agus feels that the linkage between religiosity and gotong royong has now become so blatant that overt gotong royong rhetoric can be discarded altogether—even if its attendant control features remain (buttressed instead by religious obligation). ‘Used to be “gotong royong”, now its “for Allah”. It’s all the same,’ he says.<sup>103</sup>

Yes, that’s the way it is. I too have experienced it myself; if you don’t go to prayers at the mosque, you are summoned, yelled at and slandered. This happens in all sorts of ways. It happens due to the power he [Pak Uus] feels he has. Previously, I too was afraid. Now, perhaps since we are in the midst of *reformasi*, I feel freer to speak. Don’t get me wrong, this is not an act of revenge; I’m sorry, but I’m not that way. I only wish to know for sure why all of this has happened. And, if an explanation is offered, I simply wish for him to realize the sorts of wrongful things he has done. *Alhamdulillah*, I simply hope for that, to truly clarify everything.<sup>104</sup>

Poor kampung residents remain labelled—and Pak Uus not infrequently resurrects the communist apparition in order to keep them in their place: ‘Ah, basically they’re all PKI [*Partai Komunis Indonesia*—‘The Indonesia Communist Party’]’, he often says, when confronted with what he takes to be obstinacy on their part.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup>‘Dulu, gotong royong, sekarang ‘bagi Allah. Sama saja.’

<sup>104</sup>‘Ya begitu, saya mengalaminya sendiri, tidak mengaji itu dipanggil, disentil, dimarahi ‘bebel kehed’, ah segala macam lah, karena dia merasa punya kekuasaan itulah. Kemarin saya juga takut. Sekarang saya bisa mengungkapkan karena adanya reformasi, bebas mengungkapkan, bukan berarti kita dendam, maaf sekali saya tidak begitu, cuma ingin tahu yang sejelas-jelasnya kenapa sampai begitu, kalau dijelaskan saya inginnya dia menyadari kesalahannya. *Alhamdulillah* saya inginnya begitu, membuat semuanya menjadi jelas sebenar-benarnya.’

<sup>105</sup>‘Dasarnya, PKI!’

An additional factor needs to be mentioned at this point. One need be in Indonesia only a short while to notice that religious events and political obligations frequently elide into each other quite easily—with political events taking on a decidedly divine service feel and with political loyalties blatantly demonstrated at religious gatherings. Setia Permana and Dadi J. Iskandar have emphasised a ‘liturgisation’ of public political processes on Indonesia’s political stage. In direct reference to political involvement and national campaigning in 1994, they asserted that

...democratic political life is very much determined by what might be called the compatibility dimension (i.e., congruity), say, when looked at in terms of meaning, a correlation of values between an idea and a statement or between a word and an action is deemed important.

In the cases it is not, political life is reduced to ‘lofty sermons’, spurious and boring. Such is the case whenever political ‘liturgical ceremonies’ arise, serving merely to maintain an air of ceremonial ritualism—clearly these are occasions not conducive as preconditions to empirical democracy. Consequently, the trappings of public elections degenerate into ‘religious’ ceremonies and/or programmes; events impossible to evaluate critically and as a result left engineered epistemologically in order that they might be legitimised in the name of the people. Those attending are required not only to offer due respect but also passive acquiescence to ‘advice’ and political banter. The general populace become quite good listeners—since at times like these it is not considered good form to ‘hold up the hand’ in disagreement (protest), responding negatively to the contents of the political talk (rhetoric). It stands to reason why members of Parliament/The Peoples’ Consultative Assembly are viewed more as representatives of socio-political organisations than of the people who elect them.

Ritualism in democratic practice, in today’s world, should rightfully be left behind—although, on the contrary, this is what frequently seems to be used as a reference for power. All the more so when referring to a collaring of the masses (i.e., mobilisation): a herding of the crowds to the ‘field’ by way of a roving encounter in order to pledge one’s ‘consecrated’ service, which, in its turn (in the



long run), only results in ersatz backing—certainly not the sort of participation emanating from the conscience of the people (1994:4).<sup>106</sup>

Steeped in sacralised language and imagery, this fits well with the gilding of all things political in metaphysical and quasi-religious inflection noted above. It also bodes well with versions of the above-described metaphysically-saturated power arrangements on the part of leaders.

But just as important is the confluence it points to between public event and religious connotation. There are probably a number of reasons for this. One obvious cause appears to lie in the performative nature which enshrouds virtually all public affairs carried out in West Java—what I will call here ‘The Mandatory Decorum of *Acara*’ (the Indonesian term *acara* is generally glossed ‘agenda’, ‘programme’, or ‘judicial procedure’). As I have observed it in Sundanese culture,<sup>107</sup> there appears to be a communal validation of all significant events or occurrences by way of standardised, public language and/or spectacle—what could easily be called a performative ceremonial sanctioning. The manner in which this is accomplished is

---

<sup>106</sup>...*Kehidupan politik yang demokratis sangat ditentukan oleh dimensi komtabilitasnya [sic] (kesesuaian), katakanlah dari sudut maknawiah haruslah menonjol pentingnya nilai korelatif antara gagasan dan pernyataan dalam kata dan perbuatan.*

*‘Jika tidak, maka kehidupan politik tidak lebih dari sekadar “khotbah-khotbah agung” yang semu dan membosankan. Demikian halnya, jika yang terjadi, justru munculnya “upacara-upacara” politik yang bersifat ritu-seremonial, jelas bukanlah suatu prakondisi kondusif bagi terwujudnya demokrasi empiris. Jadinya, fenomena pemilu tak lebih dari upacara-upacara/acara-acara “keagamaan”, yang tak bisa dinilai kritis dan melulu merekayasa legitimasi epistemologis atas nama rakyat. Hadirin bukan saja harus takzim, tapi juga bersikap pasif mendengarkan “nasihat-nasihat” dan obrol-obrol politik. Rakyat menjadi pendengar yang baik, karena di sana tidak dibenarkan, katakanlah “mengacungkan tangan”, untuk tidak setuju (protes) terhadap isi ceramah (retorika) politik. Wajar saja jika anggota DPR/MPR lebih dianggap mewakili orsospol daripada rakyat yang memilihnya.*

*‘Ritualisme dalam praktik demokrasi, dalam dunia sekarang ini, agaknya harus sudah “ketinggalan zaman”, meski toh ia kerap menjadi rujukan penguasaan. Apalagi jika dimaksudkan untuk mencari dukungan politik lewat pengerahan massa rakyat (mobilisasi). Penggiringan massa ke “lapangan” dengan pendekatan mobilitas dan janji-janji pengabdian “ibadah”, pada gilirannya (jangka panjang) hanya akan menimbulkan dukungan semu. Bukan bentuk partisipasi yang sebenarnya datang dari nurani rakyat.’*

<sup>107</sup>This possibly applies throughout much of Indonesian culture at-large as well.

via the staging of *acara*—in other words, by way of quasi-religious, liturgically-validating public drama. This seems to be enacted in at least two ways, one involving the use of language and the other a sort of theatric performance quality given to official, authorised and authorising events. As a result of this construct,

*Acara* language  
serves as:

- (1) a tool for the sacralisation of events;
- (2) a device oriented toward display, not toward (overt) information transfer (thus, buttressing the performance feature of *acara* below);
- (3) a mystical vehicle for the display of esoteric knowledge (i.e., during *pangajian* [Qur'anic recitation gatherings], *hajatan* [circumcisions], *tahlilan* [life-cycle Islamic chanting events], etc.); and
- (4) a sign that the given event is 'official' as opposed to one merely 'family' (*kekeluargaan*) in function (thus, it seems to signal which events are decidedly framed as non-*kekeluargaan* rites—i.e., joking, laughing and family-like conversation between participants are almost compulsory behaviour before and after the *acara*, but silence and a ban on flippancy are very much *de rigueur* during it).

*Acara* performance  
serves as:

- (1) a vehicle for the acknowledgment of hierarchies (to wit, who has played, does play, or will play what important part in that being validated?—a sort of positioning of players);
- (2) a public dramatisation of proper thanks given in the proper order with proper form to proper people;
- (3) a medium carrying chiefly connotative, as opposed to denotative, communication load (i.e., the performance itself serves as the agent for *acara* by carrying its own information payload in the process of staging. Thus, not nearly as great a concern is given to the surface content—with minor mistakes and mishaps in the performance not appearing to ruffle feathers a great deal).



Instances of the mandatory decorum of *acara* are legion. I will offer only a few representative examples:

- (a) All public speech/address is almost always ‘framed’ with the Islamic greeting/closing *Assalamu ‘alaikum Warohmatullahi Wabarokatuh*, both before and after public address is made (this could be called a sort of linguistic ‘halo’-isation of the *acara*);
- (b) Seemingly casual children’s birthday parties and even the taking of pictures generally take on a formal, stiff and conspicuously serious air;
- (c) A public ‘formalisation’ (*peresmian*) of all collective efforts is mandatory in order that these may be seen as proper;
- (d) Sound systems are inevitably utilised for public events, i.e., *pangajian*, public gatherings, birthday parties (once again!), *et alia*, no matter how small. The mere presence of these seem to signal the serious nature of the event.

All of this is quite similar to Clifford Geertz’s comments on Java-island state-craft and the ties it has to performance-orientation and a centralisation of power in paternalism:

[In traditional Java,]...the king, by the mere fact of being king, is the paramount sacred object. It is upon him that the whole system pivots, for he stands at the juncture of the divine and the human with, so to speak, a foot in each camp. Commonly this was expressed by indeed regarding him as the incarnation of a god, in the Buddhist variant, as a bodhisattva (or, often enough, as both). But the critical point is that in the ranking of men in terms of their capacity for spiritual enlightenment through disciplined self-inspection, their ease of access to ultimacy, he represents at once the apex, if one looks at the system from the bottom up, or the fountainhead, if, as is more in keeping with the exemplary center conception, one looks at it from the top down. Here, the problem was not fusing strong man and holy man—power and charisma were inherently correlated from the top of

the society to the bottom. The problem was to extend the power by dramatizing the charisma, to magnify the sun so that it should cast a wider and more blinding halo.

The 'Theater State' then, to complete the circle, is simply the concrete realization of this conception. The ritual life of the court—the mass ceremonies, high-wrought art, the elaborate politesse—formed not just the trappings of rule but the substance of it. Spectacle was what the state was for; its central task was less to govern—a job the villagers largely accomplished for and among themselves—than to display in liturgical form the dominant themes of Javanese culture. The capital was a stage upon which the priests and nobles, headed by the king, presented an endless sacred pageant with respect to which the ordinary man was at once spectator, spear carrier and, through the tribute and service he was obliged to render, sponsor. The scale of ceremonial activity that any particular state could mount was the measure both of its hegemony—for the more effective the state's techniques for mobilizing men and material, the greater that scale could be—and of the degree to which it was indeed an exemplary center capable of evoking the attitude Prapanca claims 'the whole of the Javanese country' had toward the 'peerless' king of Madjapahit: 'helpless, bowed, stooping, humble' (1968:37-38).

It is not difficult to see how such a performance-based, rite-oriented, language-centred spin on community events and leadership might serve to seat select persons in positions of power—after all, in this sort of atmosphere, there must always be a person certifying that the *acara* is being properly performed, that the language used is *de rigueur*.<sup>108</sup> Persons like Pak Uus and his friends in the NU region of

---

<sup>108</sup>This image agrees with what Jessica Glicker (1987) found as commonplace between the traditional Islamic religious teacher (*kyai* or *ajengan*) and his pupil in the Sundanese context. 'A religious teacher, demanding absolute obedience on the basis of his recognized position as a transmitter of divine law, guides the development of the various modes of knowing in his students. The teacher controls a type of knowledge that gives him extraordinary power. The knowledge is based on his command of the Qur'anic text and its commentaries, and the power is located in the Arabic language itself and the Islamic law which regulates all relationships and activities. The teacher teaches through the power of tradition (*taqlid*) [sometimes glossed 'blind imitation' or 'blind acceptance of authority and tradition'] which is religiously interpreted as the power of the source; the proximate source for the student is his teacher' (:246); or 'Ascribed characteristics—i.e., characteristics that are perceived to be relatively immutable by the actions of individuals—have traditionally defined the parameters of *hormat* [respect]. One could *achieve* higher status in Pasundan only by making the *haj* [pilgrimage to Mecca] or acquiring a great deal of religious knowledge. Higher status in the religious sphere, however, indicates increased subservience to the (immutable and unchallengeable) religious laws located in the Qur'an which regulate behavior in the *ummat* [community of Islamic believers]. The demonstration of *hormat* marks social location and guides social behavior in the

(continued...)



Karang Resik seem to relish wielding authority over liturgically-flavoured community events. And with the more powerful NU region boasting an official 'pesantren' or religious boarding school in its territory, formalisation of sacrosanct involvement becomes theirs by virtue of geographic prerogative. In this equation, those left with the short end of the stick in Karang Resik once again are the 'little people' toward the other end of community—those residing in the Middle Region.

\*\*\*

So, how have Middle Region residents responded to this atmosphere? Have they been entirely without countervailing resistance—or have they taken it upon themselves to subvert and resist? If so, what sort of subversion are they capable of—ones seemingly so beaten down, so controlled, so domesticated? Now that they have been left untethered as a client stratum by their former patrons, how are they able to cope?

The first thing that must be said is that we should not pity these folk; they are resilient now and they always have been. My time in the region and my discussions with them tell me that, regardless of what it takes, they will survive.<sup>109</sup> We heard

---

<sup>108</sup>(...continued)

secular community according to unchangeable and unchallengeable social "rules" as the divine law found in the Qur'an defines and regulates behavior in the religious community, the *ummat*. Both sets of constraints are an integral part of what it means to be Sundanese and are perceived as unchallengeable' (1987:248-249).

Especially in light of the substantial role played by the symbolically-steeped triplet pembangunan/pancasila/gotong royong I have underscored above, it is interesting to note here the crucial part played by esoteric languages (Arabic and Javanese) as well as other varieties of symbolism in this whole process (cf. 1987:251). Furthermore, we have already encountered the concept of *taqlid*, in our examination of the differences between NU and Persis.

<sup>109</sup>Obviously I am speaking of these folk here as a class of people—in other words, they will not be exterminated. In actual fact, considering the manner in which power is arranged in Karang Resik (and in other poor villages in West Java), the wealthy need the poor, if for no other reason than to implement their preconceived pembangunan projects. However, it would be a preposterously gullible statement for me to suggest that neither Pak Cece, Pak Ujang, nor Pak Agus were vulnerable  
(continued...)

Verhelst comment above<sup>110</sup> that there is a frequent ‘subversion of the logic accompanying the imported object or institution’ in the development context. This is how Hakekat residents have responded. Their ‘subversion’ has generally not been something which drastically disturbs alignments of power in the context—covert dissidence have been more their style. However, simply the fact that resistance has arisen at all should tell us something. These people are not vanquished—they still have life in them and they are still kicking. Furthermore, they also have not swallowed the prevailing picture dished out about them by those in charge.

First, they have subverted local pembangunan logic in relation to the belittling speech directed their way. True inversion of the symbolic terrain has resulted—a ‘turning upside-down’ of the meaning of words.<sup>111</sup> As was previously mentioned, a mikung nest appears very similar to a *jangkrik* nest, though sometimes bigger and more deeply tunnelled. Based upon this fact, Middle Region residents like to point out (more often to themselves than to others) that mikung burrow deeper than do *jangkrik*. As a result, they say, mikung are ‘...deeper—we need not prattle on.’<sup>112</sup> They have taken these reorientations as indicative of their own covert understanding of a deeper reality—an awareness of what they see as the actual state of affairs frequently overlooked by NU and *Persis* folk. Middle Region residents take great pride in genuine religious allegiance which they define more in terms of

---

<sup>109</sup>(...continued)  
to the force of this power discrepancy. Such an assertion would simply be untrue.

<sup>110</sup>See page 54.

<sup>111</sup>We will look at ‘World Turned Upside-Down’ logic and subversion in greater detail in later chapters.

<sup>112</sup>‘*Lebih dalam, tidak harus ngomong.*’



service than in terms of *acara* ritual or in terms of gotong royong sponsored by top-down directives. As a result, they are often engaged in what could only be described as sincere, indiscriminating assistance.

One can see this in their efforts to be the first to lend a hand in the event of a death in the community. Such assistance commonly includes a washing of the body, the digging of a grave or other similar preparations. Hakekat residents take pride in volunteering this aid without fanfare or a request for payment. In fact, they often go to great lengths to rush to home of the bereaved, then on to the burial spot, digging the hole and then rushing back in order to bathe and not be found out by the wider community—an obligation of everyday service which they link to the mystical teaching of Eyang Lamsari. Middle Region residents are cognizant that neither NU nor Persis residents generally help with these loathsome but very necessary tasks (they note that the grief-stricken family is therefore often left to fend for themselves). Even in those rare exceptions when NU or Persis adherents do take up the task, it seems to be solely done in order to support those within their own region.

Thus, these Middle Region representatives relish formulating their own unique, somewhat esoteric understanding of meaning as embodied in local language and symbolism. For instance, the Islamic term *wudhu* (ritual ablutions before prayers) is often reinterpreted by Hakekat residents to mean the need to cleanse one's inner life—with manifest evidence of this being a more compassionate treatment of one's neighbour. Hence, the Islamic requisite for ablutions frequently takes on a connotation of necessary introspection for them. With this, *mikung*, *wudhu* and many other phrases as well come to mean something entirely different to Hakekat residents—a fact that makes them particularly (if still privately) proud. In

their eyes it sets them apart from others and serves as a source of increased self-esteem.

Furthermore, it provides a layer of secrecy behind which they can dodge, duck and parry external pressures seeking their subjugation. Speaking specifically of regional languages, Taufik Abdullah observes that

...each and every regional language possesses great potential for fashioning strangers out of persons located beyond their communal-ethnic confines—a Minang language speaker can easily ostracise a Balinese language speaker and vice versa....This being the case, the national language is actually comprised of a variety of sub-languages which have as one of their many defining characteristics a relative exclusivity. These sub-languages are not dialects (which possess only local characteristics), nor are they *slang* (merely seasonal, decorative jargon), nor are they even *prokem* ('secret' youth language seasonal as well as local in flavour); on the contrary, these are conduits of precise communication demanding the highest level of interpretation (1996:351-352).<sup>113</sup>

There are a great many other small, overlooked ways in which Middle Region residents defy the attempted hegemony of imported and manufactured symbols they experience. An excerpt from my field notes colourfully illustrates in narrative form the sort of underground insurrection common to Hakekat residents in the region.

My research assistant Tampan explained once more the provocative incident which initially drew my attention to the region surrounding *Tempat Wisata Karang Resik* [the Karang Resik Tourist Site]—the uprising ostensibly prompted by the opening of a pub and discotheque there.

---

<sup>113</sup>...*Setiap bahasa-daerah mempunyai kemungkinan yang tinggi untuk menjadikan seseorang berada di luar komunitas-etnisnya sebagai "orang luar"—penutur Minang dengan mudah bisa dieksklusifkan oleh penutur bahasa Bali, dan sebaliknya....Dengan begini maka jadilah bahasa nasional seakan-akan terdiri atas sub-sub bahasa yang bercorak relatif eksklusif. Sub-bahasa ini tidaklah dialek, yang bersifat lokal, atau slang, yang merupakan hiasan bahasa lisan yang bersifat musiman, atau prokem, bahasa "rahasia" para remaja yang lokal dan musiman, tetapi saluran komunikasi keilmuan yang menuntut ketepatan makna yang tertinggi.'*

*Prokem*, referred to here by Taufik, is a sort of Jakarta-based street slang, comprised of abbreviations and jargon-laden neologisms based on the national language.



He stated that the entire thing began when the place was leased to Pak Imih (Tampan said he believes Imih entered into a thirty-year lease with the local government). It seems Pak Imih initially employed Pak Ujang as a parking attendant for the facility (I suppose since Pak Ujang is a member of the local security apparatus for the community); however, since Pak Ujang would not show favouritism to certain persons in terms of parking, he was relieved of his position and was considered no longer welcome on the Karang Resik grounds. Furthermore, Karang Resik (he used the name of the place—he did not say ‘the new owner’ or ‘Pak Imih’) began buying up local land which caused surrounding land prices to soar—he has heard that this is being done (in piece-meal fashion) in order to eventually build a hotel there. Thus, poor farmers are now unable to purchase land and have been reduced to tending plots for outside landholders.

Thus, Pak Tampan himself went to Pak Edi [the head of a local, Islamic, residential training school based in the NU portion of the region] in order to protest the result—approaching him under the pretense that there was a discotheque on the grounds which threatened to bring in outside persons to the place and stir up prostitution—Tampan stated this was not actually what bothered him most, but he knew that this would get Pak Edi’s attention. Tampan intentionally used the religiously provocative word ‘maksiat’ [defiling] to describe the threat, knowing this would get a rise.

As expected, Pak Edi was suitably displeased, but he wondered ‘What are we to do about it?’ Tampan suggested making up a petition and gathering signatures—with the idea that they could later submit these to the Regent, the Mayor and the Ward Head and Village Head. Pak Edi liked the idea and said, ‘Go ahead and flesh out a rough draft’. So Tampan did just that. He returned with the draft and Pak Edi had it circulated both in the kampung as well as outside of it (deftly using his status as a local Islamic leader.) Pak Edi himself solicited the involvement and support of Pak Uus and Pak Iwan (the ‘Arab’ who was not especially liked in the area—he died unexpectedly about a year ago). They then submitted the petition as planned—but, interestingly enough, neither Pak Tampan nor any of the other Middle Region persons signed it. People like Iwan and Uus did not know that Tampan—the author of the document!—was even remotely involved.

After Pak Edi, Pak Uus and others were called to a meeting with these high-ranking local officials, Pak Imih began politicking and wining and dining the local elite, so as to garner their support—not surprisingly, he did none of this with any low-level, lower-class Karang Resik residents. In response, Tampan once more went to Pak Edi and reminded him of the threat this posed to Islam. Pak Edi bit hard.

Mang Edi announced that there would be a mass gathering at the local Village Head’s office if the objectionable activities at



Karang Resik did not cease at once—with this, Pak Imih shrewdly shifted the timing of the meeting (using his considerable influence to do this). He assumed that this would keep the necessary number of persons away, allowing him to safeguard his own objectives. It seems, however, that he underestimated the efficiency and responsiveness of the local, informal communication system; when the meeting actually did come off, hundreds showed up.

Mang Edi was in the Village Head office—in a rather formal atmosphere—and Tampan said he was very nervous as to what the outcome would be, not at all confident that the situation could be controlled. Pak Tampan said he was outside on the fringes of the crowd, seated at a local ‘warung sate Madura’ [a kiosk serving skewered chicken prepared in the style of the island of Madura], when he noticed a paraplegic by the name of Encep shimmy up. It seemed he was a part of Pak Edi’s informal information system—Edi wanted to know what Pak Tampan thought he should do (less than a year before the city of Tasikmalaya had experienced a riot so large that it grabbed national attention. Pak Edi seemed worried this could turn into a similar thing.)

Tampan sent word back to Pak Edi (by way of Encep) that Edi should push ahead anyway. Tampan assured him that nothing undesirable would happen. I later asked Pak Tampan how he knew this—he answered that he didn’t and that he, too, was nervous that it would break out into something too large. But, he said, they were left with no other choice.

Eventually, Pak Edi came out and addressed the crowd, appealing for them not to run amok but instead return to their homes. If nothing came of the meeting in the way of an acceptable response in the next few days, he told them, they would then need to act. Much to Edi’s relief, the crowd complied with his request and dispersed.

Thus, a deal was struck a couple weeks later causing control of Karang Resik to be transferred (more in name than anything) into the hands of a Pak Haji [a holy man who has gone on pilgrimage] from Central Java.

Thereafter, many of the local elite—including Pak Edi—began bragging that ‘*tanpa saya*’ [without me] the entire affair would not have progressed so favourably. Tampan did not draw attention to his own participation and many from the area did not even know he was involved. However, most Middle Region residents knew he was essentially the mastermind behind the whole affair—and, not insignificantly, for their benefit.

As an interesting postscript, Pak Iwan later chastised Pak Tampan since, according to Pak Iwan, as a university student Tampan should have summoned courage and gotten involved in order to come to the aid of Islam. This proved that he knew nothing of Tampan’s involvement in the event nor the true reason why Tampan might have



prompted the unrest in the first place. Tampan replied to Iwan that he was not a typical university student—instead of being an academic with high-minded ideas, he said, he was simply someone trying to get a job. Thus, by belittling himself he maintained his cover. Iwan seemed to accept this with approval and, thereafter, he was very friendly and warm to Tampan—a notable change from before.

Underground resistance like this, while admittedly meagre, seems designed to demonstrate one overarching point: Middle Region residents feel no need to succumb to the image thrust upon them. They constantly remind each other that local disparate images and outside language symbol structures cast their way do not define who they are—they know themselves to be different. They counterstrike with alternate images—privately held—in order to set the record straight.

But perhaps the primary—and most overlooked—means utilised by Middle Region residents to rebel against the re-configuration of patronage and the pembangunan construct is the brute fact of their loyalty to each other. As I have observed them, they seem virtually always present for one another—sharing in poverty, true enough, but sharing nonetheless. In part this is intimately tied to the way in which they conceive of religious commitment—often summed up by the term Hakekat, which, as we have seen, carries the connotation of ‘essence’ or ‘essential quality’. In the minds of Middle Region residents they are not in the least bit religious unless they are found tangibly helpful to those in need in the community—such service is both the Hakekat core (the ‘essential quality’) of all true religion and its validating manifestation. And while they reject the official version, Hakekat residents genuinely believe in a literal form of gotong royong—and they probably would continue to do so even if they became aware of the constructed

nature of the concept at the national level. To these persons, the notion is nothing more than a simple mutual helping of each other '*tanpa pamrih*'—'without profit'.

\*\*\*

We now have more than enough to serve as material for analysis of participatory paradigms for development practice—most distinctly in relation to Karang Resik, though this may have currency in relation to all of West Java or even for the whole of Indonesia. But, at present our analysis must indeed remain provisional. In the following two chapters I will examine the biblical motif of incarnation, exploring its fibre and thereafter theoretically applying it to four analogous theses of participatory engagement. In the final chapter, I will return to the context in Karang Resik in order to more closely probe my own involvement in the region—taking stock of my participation in light of the incarnational motif we have by that time developed.

All the same, several observations seem to be in order at this juncture.

We have witnessed a wide array of epistemological factors at work here. Firstly, inside/outside demarcations seem to reverberate throughout the account. Whether on the part of TNI or DI loyalists, or on the part of NU, Persis or Middle Region residents, or even on the part of Soeharto and his New Order government, boundaries and border guarding loom large in importance.

Secondly, those within the community of Karang Resik itself have long been greatly concerned for proper interpretation; this often denoted by the term *ijtihad*, appropriated from Arabic. Virtually all of Karang Resik's residents seem to sense the importance of being able—as was noted at the beginning of the chapter—to control the symbolic history of the region, influencing the way in which goals for the



community are (or should be) taking shape. This concern for proper *ijtihad* highlights the local importance of symbols and history in promoting images of good for the community. Hakekat residents are very aware that whichever party or person gains control of this interpretive process—not only in relation to how Islam should be embraced by local residents (whether this be in NU, Persis or Hakekat fashion) but also in relation to how national symbols such as pembangunan, Pancasila, gotong royong, and communism are to be glossed—often also decides the destiny of many others in the community. This was very evident in local events surrounding the cataclysmic upheaval at the national level in 1965, and it has remained so even to this day.

All the same, this has not meant that Middle Region residents have been left entirely bereft of *ijtihad* manoeuvres, as we have also seen. These residents—behind the curtain and off of the stage—have engaged in what might be called a certain ‘upside-down’-ism; an upending of the symbolic field so as to reorient cognitive terrain. With this, Hakekat residents have been able to sustain a sense of self-worth and belonging promotive of cohesion and group loyalty. And they have done this over a period of almost three decades.

We have also discovered a wide variety of cultural factors at work in the above. For instance, patronage and hierarchies have exerted huge influence in Karang Resik—as they have also throughout Indonesia for quite some time. As was noted, these couplets seem to have been radically reconfigured, beginning with the advent of Soeharto’s New Order government. Not only is it imperative to grapple with these constructs so as not to run roughshod over the backs of poorer persons in the region, understanding them can also assist us in knowing the terrain into which

we are entering. In a word, an adequate grasp of how patronage now works in the region can serve as an optic into the political mechanics of the community—ones we would otherwise overlook unless our attention was drawn to them. Lemarchand explains:

...the patron-client model can be used not only to identify particular structures and processes but also as an 'optic' which enables us to locate and explore some critical dimensions in the analysis of political systems. Although economic and political modernization makes possible the mobilization of new resources, the really important issues lie elsewhere: Exactly what kinds of resources are made available to whom, through what channels and within what kinds of economic and political constraints? Rephrased in these terms, the classic Lasswellian question—Who gets what, when and how?—is at least suggestive of the contribution which a clientelistic perspective can make to our understanding of the political process (1981:26).

This is all the more important as patronage shifts and comes uncoupled, as it seems now to be doing. Since this means that local control will thereafter not be nearly as effective, it would help to utilise the construct—reconfigured as it may be—as an oculus in order to ask what might be taking its place, if anything. As power arrangements realign there is sure to be a new jockeying for position, especially when resistance and countervailing speech and images which have been employed covertly by Middle Region residents are taken into account. As alignments shift, there could be potential to leverage off of the ethic of loyalty they have safeguarded—perhaps it could be catalysed into wide-spread positive and authentic forms of gotong royong, as long as a model worthy of emulation could be identified. This, of course, dare not be a facile undertaking. Deeply held suspicions in the region need to be kept in mind, those which have been prompted by bitter events and a stretch of contentious history. In relation to what we have underscored above we



must very aware of insider/outsider boundaries presently operative in the mix—especially in light of our own status as outsiders.

Another cultural factor in the region is the performative, liturgical nature of much of community life—exemplified by what I have called the ‘Mandatory Decorum of *Acara*’. Not only will we need to understand and work with this particular dimension of the culture, I believe it also underscores the need for ‘embodied’, enacted examples of participation on our part—ones described below as incarnational in quality. Purely theoretical, cognitively postulated notions of participation and empowerment will not be effective in a context such as this. Our own involvement will need to possess a liturgical and performative quality, a staging or a type of dramatisation.

Related to this but more broadly delimited, a semiotic, decidedly symbol-oriented approach to the situation dare not be bypassed when searching for models of participation fit for situations such as these. We must refuse to ‘...interpret symbolic activities—religion, art, ideology—as nothing but thinly disguised expressions of something [besides]...attempts to provide orientation for an organism which cannot live in a world it is unable to understand’, echoing Clifford Geertz (1973:140). But, as we have seen, social science and economic development schemes have tended to overlook this component, opting instead for mechanised, *pembangunan*, approaches to engagement in regions of impoverishment. ‘Blueprint’ models and drafted formulas have carried the day, with the role of symbol, sign and meaning scarcely given any thought. As Geertz puts it:

Aside from a few more venturesome (and largely programmatic) linguists—a Whorf or Sapir<sup>114</sup>—the question of how symbols symbolize, how they function to mediate meanings has simply been bypassed....

It is the absence of such a theory and in particular the absence of any analytical framework within which to deal with figurative language that have reduced sociologists to viewing ideologies as elaborate cries of pain. With no notion of how metaphor, analogy, irony, ambiguity, pun, paradox, hyperbole, rhythm, and all the other elements of what we lamely call ‘style’ operate—even, in a majority of cases, with no recognition that these devices are of any importance in casting personal attitudes into public form, sociologists lack the symbolic resources out of which to construct a more incisive formulation. At the same time that the arts have been establishing the cognitive power of ‘distortion’ and philosophy has been undermining the adequacy of an emotivist theory of meaning, social scientists have been rejecting the first and embracing the second. It is not therefore surprising that they evade the problem of construing the import of ideological assertions by simply failing to recognize it as a problem (1973:208-209; cf. Geertz 1983, esp. :19-35).

Indeed, in what follows I will make much of recent linguistic, sign and language-orientation turns in the social and political sciences in terms of how theorising is now envisioned. Even so, at this stage it is enough to note that this is also the manner in which most local kampung persons throw up defences and work through local political machinations. The domain of sign and symbol is the very ‘stuff’ of their weaponry as they struggle against harassment and marginalisation. These have been the mechanisms most puissant in their battle for ‘safety first’ (Scott 1977).<sup>115</sup> Any participation on our part will need to at least make attempts to keep pace with this. While Middle Region residents have become adept at surviving in a context like that just described, clearly they have not been satisfied with the shape it

---

<sup>114</sup>For a collection of linguist Benjamin Whorf’s writings and a presentation of his (in)famous ‘Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis’, see Whorf 1956. For a collection of the writings of his mentor, anthropologist Edward Sapir, see Sapir 1949.

<sup>115</sup>This can even be seen in the title of James Scott’s most widely known work: *Weapons of the Weak Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance* (1985).



has taken on. Besides utilising what could be called symbolic and interpretive defence mechanisms in order to achieve safety, they have also relied upon these devices in order to make sense of their world; though, it has not always made sense at a level satisfactory to their needs. While these people are admittedly far from defeated, they remain a marginalised grouping and they are thereby far from mollified by their condition. Development efforts must recognise this fact and attempt to address the shortfall evident at this juncture.

It seems to me that participatory approaches based upon the incarnation are especially apropos at this level, since the very notion of incarnation—of physical presence and embodiment—involves a concern with the linguistic, the signifying and the symbolic at the most primary level. For, if human being is ontologically symbolic, then to become involved incarnationally in a given community is to engage in and through the complexities of life as found there; living with the uncertainty and opaqueness of symbols and symbolising activity, communally engaged in the search of meaning by virtue of life lived in an incorporated openness to neighbours. As we will see, this entails a very special vulnerability, not simply in terms of what may be done to the body, but also in terms of our exposure to interpretations and speech formulated by others with whom we interface.<sup>116</sup> This type of vulnerability is something about which Karang Resik Middle Region residents know a great deal. An incarnational approach to development practice and participation dictates that the one participating learn something of such subjugation. This will become clearer as we examine the outlines of such a style in the next

---

<sup>116</sup>I am indebted to Professor Haddon Willmer for this insight.

chapter; one directly informed by the motif of the incarnation as epitomised in the biblical picture of Jesus.



## Chapter Three

### The Incarnation as Motif

A full-blown contextual model is best constructed on the example of the incarnation. This represents at its core the fact that God took the human context in its irreducible particularity with utmost seriousness. Jesus did not begin his official ministry until he was thoroughly inside the lower-middle-class, artisanal, Galilean, pious context of early first-century Judaism. The essence of the incarnation was to work for radical transformation *from within*; as such, it could be and was profoundly subversive without being in the least alien or imperialistic. So specific was the incarnation that Jesus had little contact with Gentiles. Jesus defined the needs and problems to be addressed, the goals to be aimed at, and the resources and means for attaining those goals in and from the context itself (Taber 1983:120).

In this chapter I wish to take a critical look at the Christian concept of incarnation and the value it has both as a theological paradigm for personal and communal reflection, and as a development praxis construct in general, augmenting and critiquing the notion of participation. I hope to show that such a word-picture, such a mental image, can offer us much by eliciting a more effective and humane approach to development efforts and attempts. Perhaps in this way we can be outfitted with resources better suited to contexts such as that we have just examined.

My first step will be to claim for the Christian motif of incarnation—the biblical notion of God (the Logos or Word) become flesh—an historically established place as a centrally defining tenet of the Christian faith.

Next, I will fashion an adjudicating template based upon the incarnation: an outline of its central features which can offer to us a suite of defining characteristics in an ‘incarnational approach to participation’. This guide will be focussed upon and fashioned from the concrete, incarnational notion of ‘being with’. As Ruth Page puts it,

[a hierarchical]...relationship among humans has become suspect. It is widely perceived among Christians of very different theological standpoints that vertical relationships of command and obedience make possible oppression, dehumanization or at least perpetual immaturity. Therefore social concern is expressed and social action taken to enable people to take responsibility for their own lives. Social workers of all kinds, for instance, do not provide blueprints and demand obedience to their commands, but work *with* the disadvantaged who participate in the process. Equally, the healing which people experience through consulting a counsellor comes from working *with* him or her on their personal histories. These seem to me much more appropriate models for the divine relationship than old-fashioned classroom instruction. Modern teaching is equally concerned with the participation of the student. 'With' is a word which has vast theological potential... (1991:53-54, emphasis in the original).

The potential of 'with' holds not just for Christians, nor is it simply theological in import, but sociological and political as well. This is the core idea that has led to me to explore the issue.

*A Theological Substantiation of the Christian Concept of 'Incarnation' as a Primary Motif in Christianity*

A theme takes shape in the mind of a writer who sees the world in his own way. To Brecht man is a political animal, to Eliot a spirit capable of salvation, to Beckett a useless passion. Theme, at its roots is fed by a personal vision of this kind – which is not just a way of looking, but a way of thinking and feeling. And from this it follows that the action of a play (structure, character, speech, etc.) does more than explore and clarify a particular theme. It also expresses and defines a distinctive vision of human life (R. Gaskell as cited in Page 1991:95).

Navigating one's way through a discussion on the theologically Christian concept of the incarnation is a daunting task. The fact that an ever-changing analysis of this doctrine has reverberated over the course of the last two millennia in an extremely complicated metaphysical fashion—coupled with the emotive and



historically contentious nature of the discussion—renders settled conclusions at this level well outside the scope of my purpose here. Furthermore, delving into that side of the issue would take us into regions far beyond my own present competence.

Fortunately, the above is not the charge before us. In the study below there will be no need to adjudicate the *homoousion* vs. *homoiousion* controversy,<sup>1</sup> no call to choose between an Alexandrian, an Antiochan or a Chalcedonian theory of incarnation.<sup>2</sup> The reason for this reprieve is not due to a skirting of the issues, but instead finds its legitimacy in how the problem is framed. While it is true that the Christ-event has historically been debated in a decidedly philosophical, abstract, conceptually-steeped manner, it is good to realise that this need not—and at times should not—be so.

In fact, Ruth Page makes a case for a pictorial instance of theology as a first step to be undertaken even before preceding to any form of analysis or exposition.

There is [an] aspect of drama which makes it congenial to the theological tradition in that it can be a form of thought, a cognitive process by which abstract concepts can be worked out or realized in human situations in interaction. Witness, for instance, the current use of ‘scenario’ for thinking through the implications of a decision.... ‘Salvation’ is an abstract term. It can certainly be explained by further general terms, but it can also be shown, and the Christian claim is that it was first shown and then told. Even the showing was human, however, and in the Gospels which preserve the emphasis on showing there are moments of ‘telling’ like any omniscient narrator....

Conversely, however..., even the most abstract and metaphysical account of Christ has not departed totally from dramatic action. Drama thus straddles thought and practice, embodying the

---

<sup>1</sup>In definitions plucked from historical theology, a person advocating that the Son is *homoousios* is someone who holds that God the Father and God the Son are of the same substance, whereas a person championing the *homoiousios* perspective of the Son (note the extra ‘i’ in the latter) is a person who sees God the Father and God the Son to be of like but not identical substance.

<sup>2</sup>For two representative sources as insights into these and other similar debates, see Hebblethwaite 1987 and Hart and Thimell 1989.

abstract in the particular and the metaphysical in a pattern of relationships in such a way that the audience becomes frame, such as a raised stage or particularly a proscenium arch, and that action could be passively contemplated. But even in that case there is a difference between attendance at a drama which is mere 'looking', an uninvolved observation of the surface, and the openness of 'seeing' in the sense of discerning and wrestling with what is going on through the visible gestures and audible speech.

The dramatic metaphor is thus capable of being much more than rhetorical embellishment. It can bear the weight of serving as a model for both christology and soteriology, with action and relationship as its primary characteristics, rather than putting ontology in the forefront (1991:91-92).

Comment on the function of metaphor and its relation to understanding is reminiscent of much of the work of Paul Ricoeur (esp. 1978) who takes the ability to conjure up *possibility* (in opposition to mere *actuality*) as being *the* defining characteristic of metaphor (cf. Thiselton 1992:356). By way of metaphor a new future filled with fresh possibilities and new hope opens up, giving rise to better comprehension in the process. In fact, says Thiselton, '...it is arguable that metaphoric discourse can open up new understanding more readily than purely descriptive or scientific statement' (1992:352).

David Bosch points in a similar direction. After critiquing an over-rationalistic preoccupation with theory,<sup>3</sup> he goes on to claim that it is simply not enough to counterbalance this with a concern for praxis and experience by itself. Instead, he emphasises

---

<sup>3</sup>Persons such as Barth, Brunner and Baillie also saw attempts at precise elucidation of the mechanics of the incarnation as fruitless and often harmful efforts (though this did not prevent them from taking up detailed, careful views of how to speak firmly about it). See Barth 1975:180-181, Brunner 1952:351-352 and Baillie 1948:124. This notwithstanding, many still do try, often with an eye toward repudiating the concept in its traditional form. No doubt the most celebrated recent attempt to this end has been the volume edited by Hick, *The Myth of God Incarnate* (1977). For a critique of the position represented by this work, see Lindbeck 1979 and Hebblethwaite 1987.



...the dimension of *poesis*, which [Max Stackhouse] defines as the 'imaginative creation or representation of evocative images'....People do not only need truth (theory) and justice (praxis); they also need beauty, the rich resources of symbol, piety, worship, love, awe, and mystery. Only too often, in the tug-of-war between the priority of truth and the priority of justice, this dimension gets lost (1991:431).

Bosch points out that '...the best models of contextual theology succeed in holding together in creative tension *theoria*, *praxis*, and *poesis*' (1991:431).<sup>4</sup> The latter exhibits a phylogenetic relation to 'evocative images' of possibility and metaphor.

I would like to put forward the motif of incarnation as one of—if not *the*—controlling metaphors of the Christian scheme.<sup>5</sup> This is not at all risky, seeing as how there has been a veritable avalanche of agreement. Representative of many on this score is Moltmann, who makes the point well:

In antiquity the divine being was not a problem. Its existence was rarely doubted. It was man in his relationship to God which was the problem. The next step was from the general question of God to the mystery of Jesus. Was the eternal, unchangeable God revealed in Jesus? And the answer was, the one God whom all men seek in their finitude and transitoriness became man in Jesus. 'He is the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1.15). 'In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell' (Col. 1.19). He is of one substance with God, begotten, not created, God of God, light of light, etc., as the Nicene

---

<sup>4</sup>Note the following directly from Stackhouse: '...The kind of life and world orientation that derives from *praxis* is not unrelated to *poesis*: and *theoria*. Social conduct for the common good has moments within it that may demand aesthetic celebration or theoretic reflection on the presumptions and consequences of what is being done. These moments, it is held, can be creatively instrumental to the formation of community. They can clarify, enhance, and give motivation to action. Indeed, the worth of these poetic or theoretic moments is assessed according to their relative capacity to inspire the will to active engagement. *Praxis*, in short, has become the technical term for the "action/reflection" mode of teaching and learning, one that does not focus primarily on either speculative theory or aesthetic expression, but accepts these as possible sources for action. These are sublated into a new synthesis, one that is held to be intimately tied to a particular sense of the mission of faith and of the church, and hence of theological education' (1988:85).

<sup>5</sup>For the sake of what will be attested it will not be necessary to establish the Christian concept of *incarnation* as *the* defining characteristic of Christianity—enough is demonstrated by simply showing it to be central and principal to Christianity as a world-view embraced. Nonetheless, many *do* see it as *the* central motif of the faith.

Creed says in the style of a hymn. The mystery of Jesus here is the incarnation of God, the incarnation of eternal, original, unchangeable being in the sphere of temporal, decaying, transitory existence, in which men live and die. If the mystery of Jesus is the eternal presence of God amongst men, then the salvation of the world is also to be found in him. God became man, so that men could partake of God. He took on transitory, mortal being, for that which is transitory and mortal to become intransitory and immortal (1974:88).<sup>6</sup>

At this point another question presents itself: of what relevance is this to my stated aim, namely, the inauguration of development praxis centred in participation? Where precisely is the linkage between this primary theological tenet and our action in the everyday world?

The answer lies in the hortatory nature of the motif itself—and that which brings about the exhortation. As Paul urges in the second chapter of his letter to the Philippians (undoubtedly the biblical *locus classicus* on the incarnation):

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. (2:5-8 NRSV).

Thus, serving as a motif, the incarnation can (should?) provide us with a pattern not merely *theologically descriptive*, but at once *strategically prescriptive*.<sup>7</sup> Such an image can supply for us a way of living, a manner of life, a model the likes after which we can fashion our ‘being-in-the-world’, to lean on a philosophical expression.

---

<sup>6</sup>Cf. also *inter alia* Dawe 1963:*passim*; Hebblethwaite 1987:7-8; Nida 1960:22-23; Taylor 1973:34; Pobee 1995:56.

<sup>7</sup>A paraphrase of a statement made by missiologist Jonathon Bonk (1991:115-116). See the epigram at the beginning of Chapter Five, page 224.



This divine risk, of incarnation and of cross, self-emptied and obedient unto death, is the *analogia analogans* which determines and interprets the 'desperate love' whereby the Church is chosen, called and sent, entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation and commissioned to baptize and preach (Lewis 1989:71).

This motif can provide us with an ideal as to how we are to live participatively in the world—inclusive of our development practice attempts. It can serve as our guide for defining just what participation should mean.

The Christian's faith in the Incarnation means that humanity is called to be expressive of the divine nature. There could be no greater travesty than to suppose the Christian faith is either aloof from, or unfit for, a deep social conscience, fulfilled in action (Cragg 1985:297).

It is thus at this point fair to ask, what would such a pattern look like, what would happen if we unpacked the motif? I believe there to be six characteristics we can assemble from the picture or motif of the incarnation we find in the Scriptures—what we could even describe as marks of the incarnation. In the next chapter I hope to find a bit of validation for each of these characteristics by investigating four separate participatory disciplines. Moreover, I also expect that the motif will serve as a basis for critique of each of those fields of study as well.

### *The Six Marks of the Incarnational Motif*

#### 1. Narrative Enactment – Providing Chronological Commonality and Strangeness

Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this? (Matthew 13:55-56 NRSV)

Jesus' neighbours—those from his hometown, we are told—were astounded at his teaching in the synagogue (Matt. 13:53). However, this amazement seems

prompted not so much by the content of his teaching, but by their familiarity with the life-story of the teacher. They had watched him grow into an adult, they knew the names of his family members, and they evidently still counted his sisters as neighbours in their village. They knew his life and it was like theirs. The people in the synagogue were confronted with a *commonality* that they knew all too well.

But there is much more: there is also *strangeness* couched in the foreignness and idiosyncrasy of an alien presence. Jesus embodies for those in Nazareth a challenge clothed in familiarity; a man they knew who also represented things they did not immediately want, a position which they both recognised but which also threatened change for their established narrative. By living amongst them, by entering synagogue and Nazareth, Jesus persisted in being *incarnate* in their history, developing his narrative not only with, not only within but also against their firmly established narrative.

Thus, from one angle the notion of *Narrative Enactment* coalesces well with humankind's quest for personal and communal meaning embodied and lives lived. It is a fact that we all have a story line and, at unexpected junctures, it bears a remarkable likeness to persons the world over. But, it is equally true that our story—as it differs from the stories of those amongst whom we live—becomes an alternative to established ways of living and firm modes of doing things. To live next to others is at times to live prophetically; to challenge settled ways and to question rooted assumptions. This is, in part, what we see in the motif of incarnation. As Hauerwas puts it, 'Christian convictions constitute a narrative, a language, that requires a transformation of the self if we are to see, as well as be,



truthful....To be Christian is not to obey certain commandments or rules, but to learn to grow into the story of Jesus as the form of God's kingdom' (1983:30).<sup>8</sup>

The key to this two-fold function is found in this concept of narrative.

Development practitioners—in common with average residents in poor communities—live their lives in a 'storied' fashion, linearly anticipating tomorrow and remembering yesterday. Thinkers such as Martin Heidegger (1992), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975), Paul Ricoeur (1981 and 1984-1988) and Michael Polanyi (1958 and 1967) have pointed out that a central component to the notion of narrativity is *time*: temporal, biographical chronology which is played out over a protracted period in a specific community of people. As Thiselton puts it (summarising Ricoeur's concept of narrative), 'narratives present *possibilities of human action*, as understood in terms of *a schema of time*' (Thiselton 1992:356, emphasis in the original).

Temporality, it seems, is an integral feature of life and it contributes directly to our ability to make sense of existence and actions in society—both ours as well as others'.

This being so, to live narratively in a particular community—so that residents know our names, our stories and our lives—is absolutely crucial if we truly wish to initiate anything close to participation in our development practice. And in doing so, we must bear the risk that the possibilities our presence opens up might seem strange—for some, even threateningly so.

---

<sup>8</sup>Cf. this statement by Ricoeur (1981:277): 'To follow a story is to understand the successive actions, thoughts and feelings as displaying a particular directedness. By this I mean that we are pushed along by the development and that we respond to this thrust with expectations concerning the outcome and culmination of the process. In this sense, the "conclusion" of the story is the pole of attraction of the whole process. But a narrative conclusion can be neither deduced nor predicted. There is no story unless our attention is held in suspense by a thousand contingencies. Hence we must follow the story to its conclusion. So rather than being predictable, a conclusion must be acceptable. Looking back from the conclusion towards the episodes which led up to it, we must be able to say that this end required those events and that chain of actions.'

## 2. Residential Nearness – providing Proximity and Distance

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 NRSV)

The notion of *nearness* is included in the theological motif of incarnation. Often termed the *scandal of particularity*,<sup>9</sup> the Word became flesh in a specific place, amongst specific persons, and thereafter he did not travel far over the entire course of his life. He made his home amongst local persons and he became a *stakeholder*, putting to use common development parlance. The word translated 'lived among' was often used to describe pitching a tent.<sup>10</sup> In short, he took up residence in their midst.

Such a posture supplies proximity as well as distance. The proximity comes when a single environment—a single, circumscribed space—is shared by at least two individuals in a manner which allows recognition and familiarity; in this, the other comes near and takes on a shape which looks not unlike me. However, it is also true that, as one draws near to another, differences are outlined in greater relief. What

---

<sup>9</sup>On the *scandal of particularity*, note the following from Newbigin (1995:67): 'The scandal of particularity is...the problem of relating God's universality to his particular deeds and words. God is over all and in all; not a sparrow falls to the ground without his will. Yet the Bible talks of God acting and God speaking in particular times and places. How are these related? With what propriety can we speak of particular acts of God if God is universal Lord of all? How can we relate this universality to this particularity?

'The attentive reader of the Bible will note how constantly these two themes are interwoven without any apparent sense of incompatibility. In Romans 10:12-13 Paul makes a statement of sweeping universality: "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" But this leads him straight into the assertion of the need for the missionary to go and preach (Rom. 10:14-15). In John 4:24, the text that has often been used to deny the need for "form or sign or ritual word" in religion, "God is Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth," follows immediately on the blunt statement that describes the Samaritan worship as ignorant and asserts that "salvation is from the Jews" (4:22). Universality and particularity do not contradict one another but require one another: How can this be so?'

<sup>10</sup>With allusions to Exodus 40:34-38, (the end and climax of the book) where the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle in the midst of the children of Israel.



may have previously looked similar begins to look more and more foreign as the gap is minimised. As a result, minute features end up compared and unfamiliarity accentuated.

The concept of incarnation requires such nearness. It is a commonplace in logic to speak of causes coming in two forms: necessary as well as sufficient. An example of the first would be water to a plant. One simply could not hope to sustain the life of a plant without a steady flow of it—deprive a plant of water and, sooner rather than later, it will die. Nevertheless, plants do still die even in those cases when they are adequately and properly watered. The problem here, of course, is that, though water is a *necessary* ingredient to maintain plant life, by itself it cannot guarantee anything. It simply isn't *sufficient*, of itself, for life.

Residential nearness—which can be summed up in both *proximity* and *distance* in our motif—is to community formation and participation like water is to a plant. By itself, it certainly cannot assure adequate levels of participation and involvement in projects and programmes attempted. More is subsumed under the concept of participation than mere propinquity. However, what *can* be assured is that no significant level of participation and involvement is remotely possible without it. Toward the goal of participatory involvement in communities of need, we can speak of nearness as being a necessary cause or factor, but not sufficient in and of itself. Nonetheless, we simply cannot hope for high levels of participation unless we ourselves move into the neighbourhood and become stakeholders within it. No more than we can expect a plant to live without water.

### 3. Physical Encountering – providing Tangibility and Vulnerability

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.... (I John 1:1 NRSV)

When the apostle Thomas refused to believe in the resurrection appearance of Jesus (due to the fact that he was not physically present at the latter's most recent reappearance), he uttered the following statement: 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe' (John 20:25 NRSV). It is interesting that, at Jesus' next appearance amongst them a week later, instead of upbraiding Thomas for a lack of faith, he offered to Thomas the opportunity to do just what Thomas said he needed: 'Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe"' (John 20:27 NRSV). Jesus used the offer of touch to answer doubt.<sup>11</sup>

The offer of touch on the part of Jesus also seems paradigmatic in his quest to bring healing—note the many persons supernaturally restored to health by way of an extended hand or gentle, physical contact. Presumably, if there was a divine presence extant in the person of Jesus (something taken for granted by the gospel writers), he could have easily healed by way of fiat—through a word spoken. So why the repeated instances of touch? Perhaps healing without touch somehow falls short of the human authenticity that Jesus wished to take on. Whatever the reason, there

---

<sup>11</sup>The point being made here stands irrespective of whether Thomas actually *did* take up the offer to validate Jesus' presence by means of touch—since that being underscored is the *offer* of tactility on the part of Jesus.



was tangible tactility to the incarnation that often seemed the impetus for wholeness and comfort.

This should not surprise us. We are told that there is something deeply healing about the sensation of touch. Babies require it as a part of their nurturing, it is an inherent part of the act of procreation and the world-wide hospice movement has taken tactile sensation and contact to be one of its primary characteristics, in contrast to standard care on offer at hospitals. It seems that when moods are low, when emotions are high and when nerves are thin, a soothing touch can often calm the soul

Of course, there can be a dual-edge to this sword. Cultural strictures and mores dictate acceptable levels and boundaries of touch between particular persons in given places—all the more so in tradition-based societies as the factor of gender comes into play. But, while this should serve to warn us, it does not invalidate the point. It simply underscores what has already been said above: our involvement must be narratively enacted and residentially near as a means to full-bodied participation. Sustained engagement in a given community is what will instruct us concerning these taboos, limits and prohibitions, helping us better understand how to interface with local customs and cultures. But the fact remains that we must be bodily involved in the work at hand, sweating with those involved, getting rained on at the same times and subject to the same heat and forces of weather. All of this is included in our physical involvement in local conditions.

But an additional facet to this component needs to be explored. While physical encountering does include literal, touchable involvement, it must not be reduced to a simple case of material tactility. At a deeper level what seems most

characteristic here is not our power to heal through touch, but our potential to be wounded through vulnerability. Charming babies are a joy to hold, but we encounter a more challenging logic in the presence of a beggar, a leper, an outcast, or an enemy. Being present to persons like this makes us vulnerable and exposes our weakness. Consequently, the instinct is to flinch, to avoid, to run—to hide our vulnerability and shield ourselves where we feel most exposed. But such is not the picture we get of the crucified one—in situations such as these, Jesus made himself vulnerable and susceptible.<sup>12</sup> Paul vividly echoes the logic of this when he says, ‘therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong’ (II Cor. 12:10 NRSV). Such a paradoxical strength—couched in vulnerability—is the basis for this mark of tangible presence incarnationally placed before others.

If we are to take this feature upon us, we too must be present to the other even when we are faced with ugliness, with reprehensibility, with stupidity or with that which disgusts and threatens. We must share space with others who seem so different from us, taking upon ourselves a willingness to be vulnerable—without drawing away, without flinching, without hiding. Surely this is a mark of the divine.

---

<sup>12</sup>Such does not preclude astute discernment and the need to assess opportunities in terms of desired impact and strategic implementation. In other words, a concern for vulnerability and susceptibility does not mean that we blindly entrust ourselves to any and all—such an approach could threaten to undo that which we are attempting to accomplish. Even when faced with increasingly positive response on the part of followers in Jerusalem, ‘...Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone’ (John 2:24-25 NRSV). In short, while there is a biblical concern for gentleness and strength in weakness, there is also a balancing admonition toward shrewdness (cf. Luke 16:1-8).



4. Social Embedment – providing Accountability and Reconciliation

The angel said to [Mary], ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren...’  
(Luke 1:35-36 NRSV)

We are told that one woman, Mary, was a young teenager; the other, Elizabeth, was advanced in years. Both were unexpectedly pregnant by virtue of supernatural involvement. The text places them together, yes to contrast, but more likely in order to underscore similarities. What is often overlooked, however, is that they were relatives. Out of one came a man of mystery and oddity, preaching in the desert, feasting on locusts, making mountains low, raising valleys high—his name was John the Baptist. From the other woman was born the long awaited one, ‘...a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel’ (Lk 2:32), the King of Israel, the Messiah: Jesus. The former one prepared the way for the latter (Matt. 3:1-12; Mk 1:2-8; Lk 3:15-17). But, they were not simply partners in a common mission, colleagues with a shared vision, comparable crazies, nor even co-labourers in the vineyard of God. They were blood cousins, born of women with kinship ties.

So we see that the text places Jesus—at the very time of his birth—as one deeply embedded and genuinely enmeshed in webs of local relationships—accountable and responsible to his community. Such an image stands squarely positioned in the normal stream of the biblical tradition.

The modern reader, standing in the post-Enlightenment tradition of individual identity, self-definition, and self-actualization, endows the biblical texts with a radically different set of definitions for even the most basic words. ‘Self’ becomes not a reflexive reference to the person, but a discrete, individualized function of the personality and its ego-identity. In first-century usage, ‘self’ referred to the person as

a whole, not to the core 'self' of the individual which is grounded in self-esteem and actualized in search for self-fulfillment.

In the twentieth century, the self is a rational subject who views other and the world as object, and grows into an emancipated, autonomous individual with all final referents of value within the self—what one thinks, believes, chooses, actualizes in life. The teaching of Jesus stands in striking contrast to such assumptions of the primacy of the individual. His instructions are guides and goads toward reconciliation. His expressed concern is not about the inner peace of the person who forgives to find release from private feelings of guilt; his goal is the reestablishing of relationship, the restoring of harmony, the regaining of community.

Puzzling as it may be to postmodern individualists, this is the nature of the language of the biblical documents. The corporate sense of human personhood, the sense that sociocentric personalities live in interconnected balance, is present linguistically as well as sociologically. The frequency of plural forms that address the group, not the individual; the rarity of descriptions of solitary experience; and the absence of a sense of self as a discrete, autonomous entity all focus reconciliation on the person-in-community (Augsburger 1996:148-149).

This notion of 'person-in-community' (cf. also Daly and Cobb 1994:7) as an anthropology proper has far more in common with the majority of tradition-based societies in the non-West than it does with the West itself. And as Augsburger underscores, it stands in stark contrast to the person of modernity.

Consequently it should come as no surprise that Jesus—as the New Testament's paradigm for personhood—is presented in terms antithetically opposed to the veritable High Plains Drifter cowboy, wandering in off the desert, unnamed and unaddressed, only to mysteriously ride off after the battle is completed and the 'West is won'. It is easy to contrast this incarnational image of on-going accountable participation with the pervasive image of the heroism we imbibe in American films.

Transposed to the urban wilderness, this new-model Western hero becomes a tough cop sometimes forced to operate outside the law in order to circumvent the slow-moving machinery of formal justice, even to adopt criminal disguise in order to penetrate the secrets of the underworld. As a defender of freedom in foreign wars, he has to



contend not only against the enemy, for whom he learns a grudging respect, but against military and civilian bureaucracies and against misguided peace lovers, ungrateful beneficiaries of his prowess, who weaken America's will to fight. No longer even-tempered by virtue of an intuitive appreciation of natural beauty, he becomes, in his latest incarnation as Rambo, a creature of pure rage, more savage in his righteous strength than the savages he pursues. In politics—for it is hardly to be expected that imagery so deeply embedded in popular culture would fail to shape perceptions of political leaders, even their own perceptions of themselves—some of his characteristics can be discerned in half-mythical figures like Joseph McCarthy, whose supporters excused his rough methods in the struggle against subversion on the grounds that it was dirty work but someone had to do it, and of course in the more genial person of Ronald Reagan, himself a veteran of the screen and therefore an ideal choice for the real-life reenactment of a role that sums up the chauvinistic, self-righteous, expansionist implications of Western mythology (Lasch 1991:99).

There is yet another dimension to social embedment: it curbs flight when disparate parties are faced with the need to reconcile. One of the key distinctives of our modern lifestyle is a radicalisation of choice; supermarkets overflow with selection, new modes of transport afford visits to far-flung lands unthinkable to previous generations and the expansion of the information super highway furnishes a panoply of entertainment, interaction and virtual involvement—all at the click of a button.<sup>13</sup> One has simply to choose according to taste. But, the modern person's

---

<sup>13</sup>Peter Berger (1974) puts the matter well: '...In most of the world today, traditional frameworks of meaning are under severe stress and are in the process of changing their fundamental character. In other words, the matter is complicated by the global fact of *modernization*. There are many facets to this process, but a crucial facet may be expressed as follows: *Modernization is a shift from givenness to choice on the level of meaning*. Tradition is undermined to exactly the degree in which what previously was taken for granted as a "fact of life" becomes something for which an individual may or may not opt. Consequently, in any situation undergoing modernization, it is often unclear which of the two versions of the "right to meaning" should pertain—the right to choose freely or the right to be left alone in the old givenness. This unclarity is not just in the mind of the outside observer; it marks the minds of those who are in the modernizing situation. It has often been remarked that individuals in the throes of modernization are torn, divided within themselves. A decisive aspect of this division is the ambivalence between givenness and choice. It is not difficult to see that anomie is a powerful threat under such conditions' (:196-197, emphasis in the original).

The thesis of another of Berger's books—*The Heretical Imperative* (1979), a sociological examination of Westernised, modern concepts of religion—is almost entirely focussed upon this choice  
(continued...)

capacity to work through problems in community has thereby been greatly attenuated. When an issue arises between two persons or parties—since there is no givenness to their situation—those involved now simply evade it by means of the many choices available. Flight into choice has dulled the modern person's ability to work through issues in community. The modern individual is equipped with very little of what could be called 'relational endurance'.

By requiring embedment in local communities and neighbourhoods, the image of the incarnation staunches this tendency.<sup>14</sup> Personhood is envisioned as neither autonomous nor detached; therefore, individuals need each other in order to be complete and one's community is a necessary part of what provides a person's identity—no choice is provided in this since no choice is deemed available. For the person incarnated, his or her identity is in large part defined by the community into which he or she is enmeshed. Consequently, such an individual has greater motivation to cooperate with others since choosing another community is simply not an option—it would be like becoming someone else.

This being the case, a portion of an incarnational development practitioner's role will be embedding in a local community in such a way so as to become accountable to the residents who live there. Furthermore, he or she may be called upon to bring about reconciliation between parties internal to the local community who have long been at odds with each other. Such an undertaking will take time and

---

<sup>13</sup>(...continued)  
as the one and only 'imperative' still functioning in Western society.

<sup>14</sup>Though it must be said, it does not guarantee reconciliation. Like residential nearness to community formation, social embedment is a necessary cause for reconciliation, but it is not sufficient in and of itself. Persons can remain unreconciled in spite of it; but they can scarcely become reconciled without it.



great patience. In fact, it may at times implicate the practitioner him- or herself, in which case he or she may need to engage in overtures of reconciliation with others in the community as well—in the event that feelings end up hurt, messages end up garbled or sides end up being taken.

But we should pause to ask ourselves: are we up to the task? Can we be so sure that those of us in development circles, persons raised on these images of individualism ‘so deeply embedded in popular culture’, are free of their influences? Seeing as how the mytho-poetic figure of the ‘rugged individualist’ looms as a towering icon in Enlightenment-steeped circles, what sorts of steps are we taking to ensure that we are suitably enmeshed in local communities of practice. What sort of interests in the community—personally embraced, untied to the ‘development project or programme’ *per se*—do we hold? Do we know others deeply and are we deeply known? This is the sort of participation that is called forth by the incarnational motif—and, as it did for Jesus, it is sure to take us a good bit of time.

##### 5. Flexible Availability – providing Access and Preference

Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs. (Matthew 19:13 NRSV)

Little children are a supremely inefficient lot. Once watches are synchronised, diaries consulted, appointments confirmed, and promises made, one can always trust a child to ignore it all and throw a spanner in the well-oiled works. Unanticipated hunger reasserts itself, nappies need changing, preferences realigned and all good planning comes to naught.

Or perhaps there is another way of looking at it. In the above litany of responsibilities, are we not brought face-to-face with some of the trademarks of the age of modernity, the apparatus of industry and commerce—watches, diaries, appointments, schedules? Are these not but a few of our Western symbolic icons that serve to show us just where it is that we place our priorities? And are they not also often the tools of the trade for those of us in the development industry?

This is precisely the sort of reasoning proffered by Peter Berger and his associates in their book *Modernization and Consciousness*. Berger *et alia* claim that, for the non-Western individual eagerly embracing modernisation the two primary ‘sacraments of modernity and its promises’ (1973:144) are the wristwatch and the ballpoint pen. As do all sacramental symbols, these maintain far greater significance than simple utilitarian functionality. The first seems to signify the concept of time, a quality at the heart of the entire technological production process; the second, literacy and the vast storehouse of knowledge that it affords.

As the symbols of modernity are visibly attached to the human body, so are modern structures of consciousness superimposed upon the human mind....The significance of wristwatch and ballpoint pen can be put in sacramental terms. They are the outward, visible signs of an inward transformation of consciousness. They express the collisions, the conflicts and even the rituals brought about by the intrusions of modernity into traditional social life (1973:144-145).

And while they were certainly not moderns, what Jesus’ disciples experienced as ‘collisions and conflicts’ in this case were intrusive children.

Contrapuntally, by being flexibly available Jesus extends an invitation to children—yes, even to inefficient children—to *participate* in the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’. Perhaps this indicates something about the priorities of scheduling and managing when we are looking for guidance from the incarnational motif.



Furthermore, the above does not seem to be a unique incident. As one traces Jesus' wanderings throughout the vicinity of Galilee, one is struck by the number of times his schedule seems externally and spontaneously altered. For instance, after drawing quite a crowd by restoring the Gerasene demoniac in Mark 5:1-20, Jesus crosses over the Sea of Galilee and we are told that

...a great crowd [again!] gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.' So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. (Mark 5:21b-24 NRSV)

Just then '...there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years...[who] came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak...' (Mark 5:25, 27 NRSV). It seems she wished to be healed—and, indeed by virtue of this contact, she was.<sup>15</sup> After explaining to this elderly woman the source of her healing, Jesus once more is approached—'while he was still speaking...' (Mark 5:35)—by people from Jairus's household. Due to the delay, Jairus's daughter had died. Unperturbed, Jesus carries on to her home and, after restoring her life, gives her back to her parents.

The shift in attention and agendas is palpable. Jesus seems first whipped in one direction, then in another. Anyone who has lived in communities steeped in tradition and interwoven with relationships can attest to the fact that the most noteworthy events simply defy scheduling: death, birth, floods, fire, etc. If we are to participate in the pulse of communities such as this, we will need to learn how to stay

---

<sup>15</sup>Note the emphasis on touch once again—further buttressing the point made above concerning tactility, healing and incarnation; see page 101ff.

open and flexible. Since this is how these sorts of communities subsist, there simply is no other way to involve one's self in their affairs, whether personally or programmatically. As we heard David Korten tells us in Chapter Two, the best development projects are those that '...have little in common with the implementing organizations geared to reliable adherence to detailed plans and conditions...Its requirement is for organizations with a well developed capacity for responsive and anticipatory adaptation...' (1980:498). *People* with these sorts of capacities are necessary as well.

But flexibility does not imply unchecked aimlessness. Jesus's manifest adaptability when faced with inefficient children and the ritually unclean community (such as the woman with the haemorrhage) indicates something about his priorities (note that Jesus's delay caused by this woman resulted in the 'death' of the daughter of one of the leaders of the synagogue—surely, this was not the way to curry favour from those in command.) That Jesus held to distinct priorities can easily be seen in his interaction with the Canaanite woman from Syrian Phoenicia who begged him to deliver her daughter of evil spirits (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). Jesus answers her request by saying that he must 'let the children [of Israel] be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs' (Mark 7:27 NRSV). But, even this story seems to showcase priorities which are at distinct odds with that normally expected. At face value, it seems that the humility of this woman's response causes him to attend to her needs.<sup>16</sup> At one level, this is surely true. But it is important to also realise that the author of the gospel of Mark places this story in

---

<sup>16</sup>Her answer, which seems to yield the desired response from Jesus, is: 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs' (Mark 7:28 NRSV).



the flow of a discussion concerning cleanness and uncleanness (cf. Mark 7:1-23)—emphasising that this woman’s ‘uncleanness’ as more acceptable to him than the ‘cleanness’ of the Pharisees and scribes just previously encountered. And in doing so, he highlights the tenuous quality of all prevailing purity classifications—provocatively turning them on their head in order to accent a very unusual ‘upside-down’ value system. In passages like this the reader is confronted with what we have been called Jesus’s ‘preferential option for the poor’—his tending first to the needs of the dispossessed.

This theme is not foreign to the development world. Approaches focussing upon ‘basic human needs’ as top priority or even the World Bank’s recent interest in poverty alleviation seem to resemble such a preference. However, for the most part such predilections have been proffered only rather recently and, even today, are not at all widely embraced on the part of development practitioners. By living amongst the poor and encountering actual privation face-to-face, the incarnational motif pushes such preferences to the fore. To be flexible is to be available—especially for those most in need of assistance, attention and care.

6. Verifiable Emptiness – providing Authenticity and Challenge

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12:23-24 NRSV)

The primary text pointing to the emptying motif of Jesus–Philippians 2:5ff–has previously been cited above. What it highlights is a contrast in trajectory, an about-face in direction. While the most common of ethics in today’s society at-large consists of a striving toward upward mobility—a making it to the top—the incarnational motif flouts this by posturing downward mobility of the most public sort as the mark of success. Concern for others less fortunate is its trademark—its bottom line—and discernible servitude is its outgrowth. Jesus said, ‘this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends’ (John 15:12-13 NRSV). As Sanneh says,

if human striving is worth anything at all it has to be worth the Creator having a stake in it, of his being at risk in our risks and vindicated in our moral life. It should be a natural proposition that life in the flesh is actually a prerequisite for comprehending something of God’s unfathomable compassion, what in my language we call his ‘numbing’ capacity to take on our suffering: it knows the fullest limits of human endurance. Those who know in their hearts the softening effects wrought by devoted attendance upon God’s law would find in his active solidarity with our tribulations personal evidence of his ‘numbing’ compassion. His skin creeps with our torments. The world is aflood with the tide of a personal God who rests on our suffering like the sea on the shore (1984:172).

This sets the stage for our own engagement in the world. Following on just after the text cited above, Paul proclaims ‘I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death’ (Philippians 3:10 NRSV). While some translations put this ‘the *fellowship* of his



sufferings’, one could just as easily read it ‘a *participation* in his sufferings’—and as a participation in the sufferings of the poor of the earth. Participation and suffering are here woven together into a statement of worshipful adoration. Comprehensive personal divestment seems anything but peripheral to the Christian message.

This is most evident in the life of Jesus as portrayed in the gospel of Mark. The primary thesis of W. H. Vanstone’s book *The Stature of Waiting* is that, after being handed over to the chief priests by Judas Iscariot, Jesus willingly ‘...exchanged action for passion, the role of a subject for that of object’ (1982:32). Vanstone goes to great lengths to examine the picture we have of Jesus before he is handed over to the authorities; early in Mark’s gospel, Jesus is the one full of action, the character in control, the mover on the scene who is making things happen. Vanstone points to the frequency in these passages with which Jesus is placed as the subject of sentences centred on action, the large number of events that are narrated from Jesus’ point of view, the frequency with which the actions and responses of other characters are prompted by the initiative of Jesus. In this section of the gospel, says Vanstone, even many vivid descriptions of Jesus’s emotions are at the centre of the story—illustrating that, for the gospel writer, Christ’s internal activities and responses were also important.

In the earlier part of the Gospel Jesus speaks authoritatively, effectively, decisively, changing situations with His words, taking fishermen from their nets, casting out demons, stilling a storm, confounding critics, raising the dead (1982:21).

But, all of this radically changes following the appearance of Judas in the garden (Mark 14:43ff). With this, Jesus becomes the *acted upon*, not the actor.

...From this point to the moment of Jesus’ death on the Cross, a period which occupies...one hundred lines of narrative, Jesus is the

grammatical subject of just nine verbs. And the reason for the change is not, of course, that Mark has now gone on to a different story and that Jesus is no longer there. Jesus is there all the time, at the very centre of the story. But now He is no longer there as the active and initiating subject of what is done: He is there as the recipient, the object, of what is done (1982:20).<sup>17</sup>

If we couple this with Susan Garrett's thesis (1998) that the gospel of Mark is concerned primarily with Jesus's fulfilment of his vocation in the face of a severe temptation to shrink back—culminating successfully in his 'not my will but thine' prayer in the garden just before his encounter with Judas highlighted by Vanstone (1982:32-42, see esp. vv. 35-36)<sup>18</sup>—we might speculate as to the nature of the temptation. It seems likely that it represents an enticement to continue to act forcefully, to continue to be in charge, to—as God incarnate—carry on being the *subject* of events and not their passive *object*. In contrast, Jesus offers an example of obedient surrender of the self for the sake of others, a partnering with the poor by taking up their position as object, a subjecting of one's self to the whims and will of others, a surrender of control over predetermined outcomes. Using the language of Indonesia from the previous chapter, what we have here is a willingness to become subject to *pembangunan* logic when one could easily assert a right to *perkembangan*. Vanstone calls this 'the posture of waiting'.

In a related manner—and directly related to community development theorising—Paulo Freire has stated that the poor of the earth are generally treated as

---

<sup>17</sup>Later in the book Vanstone also makes a similar point in reference to the gospel of John.

<sup>18</sup>Garrett claims that the 'trial of Jesus' was neither when he stood before the high priests nor when he was placed before Pilate. Instead, she says, Jesus was tried (and pronounced successful) in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he acceded to the Father's will in spite of a profound temptation to recoil.



objects by outsiders (whom Freire labels 'invaders'), who inevitably place themselves as subjects to all activities in the context.

The relationships between invader and invaded are situated at opposite poles. They are relationships of authority. The invader acts, the invaded are under the illusion that they are acting through the action of the other; the invader has his say; the invaded, who are forbidden this, listen to what the invader says. The invader thinks, at most *about* the invaded, never *with* them; the latter have their thinking done for them by the former. The invader dictates; the invaded patiently accept what is dictated (1973:113, emphasis in the original).

Freire goes on to say that the only way in which this hierarchical subject-object binomial can be deconstructed and become a subject-subject partnering model is by way of what he calls a *conscientization*, a new awareness on the part of both parties of the similarity they have with each other. This sort of new awareness requires new pictures and new possibilities placed before those participating—with each thereby embracing new conceptions of the other.<sup>19</sup>

As those involved in a vocation concerned with the less powerful, development practitioners—as potential invaders—must embrace this trajectory of emptying and not shrink back. Since empowerment on the part of the weak will only be purchased by way of divestment on the part of the powerful, we are in need of a metaphor able to conjure up that possibility. I am proposing here that we undergo a

---

<sup>19</sup>The notion of *conscientization* has been critiqued as being elitist in nature. For example, a former colleague of Freire's, sociologist Peter Berger, challenges the construct, claiming that it by necessity is based upon an arrogant outside-inside posturing, with the outside 'conscientizer' attempting to augment or enhance the conscience of local tradition-based persons. See Berger 1974. Put another way, Freire and his cohorts have sometimes been accused of implying that '...only the consciousness of the poor needed to be raised because [the researchers] were already fully conscious of how oppression operated....' (Manzo 1995:250).

I actually see this as a mis-reading of Freire, since he spends a good bit of time focussing on a sort of mutual *conscientization*, where both the oppressor as well as the oppressed are motivated towards new frames of reference—as Freire points out, for their mutual benefit.

**PAGE  
NUMBERING  
AS ORIGINAL**



**PAGE  
MISSING  
IN  
ORIGINAL**

we choose to take up stand little chance of issuing forth in true participation unless they are undertaken in a manner which is

- Narratively Enacted,
- Residentially Near,
- Physically Encountered,
- Socially Embedded,
- Flexibly Available and
- Verifiably Emptied.

This point holds no matter how often the term participation is batted about, coopted or debated. A corollary to this is, those involvements that do take the six marks seriously will find themselves deeply involved in local communities, experiencing participation of the innermost sort, giving rise to results more in keeping with the notion of participation in the first place.

### *Three Overarching Characteristics*

Rather than serving as a neat, tidy and fully-within-our-grasp intervention technique, what confronts us in these six marks is a tremendous amount of overlap, complexity and dialectic tension. What is implied is more of a process to be lived than a method to be applied—which is no surprise, since we are speaking here of an approach physically and humanly embodied. In concluding this chapter, I would like to explore a few of these tensions and overlaps—delving into creative oppositions which might help us to balance attempted involvement in local communities and contexts. To do this, I will explore three overarching characteristics of our six marks which epitomise the dialectical process of participation I have put forward here. These three categories are: (1) the *concrete* nature of incarnation itself, (2) the *travelling* nature of the incarnational process, and (3) the *communal* nature of



incarnational involvement. I will look briefly at each of these in turn, highlighting creative tensions as these become apparent.

### *Concreteness*

To emphasise incarnational involvement and participation is to place a focus on the concrete. When faced with real persons in actual situations of lack, the ethereal and abstract will not suffice—conjectured food will not satisfy and hypothetical jobs will not employ. Participation must be tangible, experienced and palpable if it is to be any good in such a context.

Concreteness implies tangibility, a fleshing out in material form. In fact, etymologically the word stems from the Latin *concrecere* which is comprised of the particle *com-* meaning 'with' and *crescere* meaning 'to grow'. Thus, that which is concrete is that which actually organically 'grows with'—takes shape for or toward—other objects in a material place and in an actual time; in order to be concrete, it must be able to be touched, seen, felt, tasted or physically experienced. There is a coming near. To be concrete is to be accessible and available. One finds a tangible corporeality, a palpable enfleshment in the concrete. This is something which is shot through each of the six marks of the incarnation.

But perhaps we can better understand what the concrete is by contrasting it with what it is not. Such a contrast is explored by Herman Daly and John Cobb in their work *For the Common Good* as they underscore how necessary the *concrete* is to the entirety of the development process. In doing so, they explore the nature of

what A. N. Whitehead called ‘the fallacy of misplaced concreteness’—an exploration of the nature of what we might call ‘specious concreteness’.<sup>20</sup>

Whitehead described the fallacy of misplaced concreteness as the inevitable process of elevating ancillary issues to primary positions in the process of reasoning.<sup>21</sup> As he says, it entails ‘...neglecting the degree of abstraction involved in thought when an actual entity is considered merely so far as it exemplifies certain categories of thought’ (as cited in Daly and Cobb 1994:36). Daly and Cobb summarize:

...It is the fallacy involved whenever thinkers forget the degree of abstraction involved in thought and draw unwarranted conclusions about concrete actuality. [In other words,]...neglecting the extent to which our concepts are abstract, and therefore also neglecting the rest of the reality from which they have been abstracted (1994:36)

Or alternatively when

...conclusions are drawn about the real world by deduction from abstractions with little awareness of the danger involved’ (1994:35).

However, unlike more formally constituted logical inconsistencies such as the naturalistic fallacy, the fallacy of composition, *post hoc ergo propter hoc* or *petitio principii*, the fallacy of misplaced concreteness is ‘...more a general limitation of conceptual thought than an error in logic’ (1994:41).

We simply cannot think without abstraction. ‘To abstract’ means literally ‘to draw away from.’ We can draw away from concrete experience in different directions and by different distances. To

---

<sup>20</sup>These two authors devote the first five chapters of their twenty chapter work to an examination of different sectors of economic theorising in light of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness: in terms of economics and other academic disciplines as a whole (chapter 1); in terms of the concept of the market (chapter 2); in terms of the measurement of economic success—with a focus on the *Gross National Product* (GNP) (chapter 3); in terms of the prevailing image of humanity in the field of economics, i.e., the theoretical concept of *homo economicus* (chapter 4); and in terms of the concept of land (chapter 5).

<sup>21</sup>There is a similarity in this to what Marx termed ‘fetishism’.



expect perfect judgment in choosing the direction and distance of abstraction proper to each argument, and never to mix up levels in the middle of an argument, is to expect too much. It seems we must always commit this fallacy to some degree, and we must think of minimizing it rather than eliminating it entirely (1994:41).

This is thought-provoking when placed alongside our theme of incarnation.

It was stated above that what ‘the incarnation motif urges us to do is to concretise our involvement in local communities’, since the incarnation compels one toward participation amounting to ‘more than words, concepts or models...it will take our concrete, whole-life sharing in concrete, real-life communities’. In participatory development practice this can be summarised as attempts at avoiding the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. In fact, Whitehead himself claimed that the only means for minimising the fallacy is through a ‘...recurrence to the concrete in search of inspiration’ (as cited in Daly and Cobb 1994:36; cf. :41-43). Approaching the development context incarnationally is precisely such a recurrence.

But, we gain further insight into the process by looking at the direct opposite to the concrete: the term abstract, which is comprised of the particle *ab-* meaning ‘away’ coupled with the root *trahere*, meaning ‘to draw’. If abstraction is a ‘drawing away’, incarnation calls one to come near. If abstraction contains within it a tendency to rarefy reality, incarnation entails a bodily involvement in local and material reality.<sup>22</sup> What better way to avoid the ‘fallacy of misplaced concreteness’

---

<sup>22</sup>Later in their book, after returning to the theme of ‘the fallacy of misplaced concreteness’, there is an interesting parallel to the religious focus in my analysis. After characterizing idolatry as the act of ‘formally...treating as ultimate or whole that which is not ultimate or whole,’ Daly and Cobb go on to underscore the degree of correspondence this has with Whitehead’s concept. As they say, ‘...we cannot live without abstractions. Similarly we cannot live without committing ourselves to what is less than ultimate. Yet there is a profound danger when we forget that the object of our commitment is only a part of a larger whole. Everyone commits the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. All of us are idolators. But we must not for that reason cease to distinguish between abstract and concrete in an effort to check our reasoning and correct our errors. Nor can we deny or ignore the difference

(continued...)

in relation to participation than by focussing upon a style of work which calls us to *concretely* participate in local communities—recurring to these as our sources of inspiration? Robert Chambers (whose thought we will look at in more detail in the next chapter) claims that even the World Bank is beginning to move in this direction:

The World Bank under the leadership of James Wolfensohn, [*sic*] is attempting to grasp this nettle [what Chambers calls ‘the primacy of the personal’]. Senior staff are not only to receive exposure to management practices in institutions such as Harvard, but are also to have a week of immersion in a village or slum. This may seem a small innovation. It is, though, a major departure from past practice, and if it lasts and spreads, may prove a defining watershed of change (1997a:1750).

One certainly hopes so, although it must be said that the inclination to abstract and sometimes even to coopt can prove an almost insurmountable temptation.<sup>23</sup> My hope is that, by placing this incarnational image of participatory praxis on offer more widely, a countervailing, demonstrable paradigm of *poesis*<sup>24</sup> might thereby be made available to those willing to ‘recur to the concrete in search of inspiration’.

But more than words, concepts or models will be required—it will take concrete, whole-life sharing in tangible, real-life communities. This is what Jesus

---

<sup>22</sup>(...continued)

between the part and the whole, the human and the divine perspective, if we are to submit our thinking to continuous correction. We need a constant reminder that our functional commitments, however worthy, fall short of the ultimate.’ (:389).

In Christian understanding, ‘the human and the divine perspective’ become fused in one individual in the incarnation. Could we say this is the divine handling of idolatry and the fallacy of misplaced concreteness in a single, concrete act of God—and in so doing, wouldn’t God himself be ‘checking our reasoning and correcting our errors’, with the goal of better aligning our functional commitments with the ultimate? Might not such a realignment of perspective be a portion of what the bible calls ‘salvation’—a transformation ‘...by the renewing of our minds’ (cf. Rom 12:2)?

<sup>23</sup>We will look more closely at the process of ‘cooptation’ in the next chapter.

<sup>24</sup>See page 94.



did. This is what we must do. As Ruth Page reminds us above, there is marvellous power in the word 'with'. Concretely.

### *Travelling*

This second characteristic principle of the six marks—the travelling nature—appears to be at odds with that just emphasised. In short, if our participatory involvement is to be focussed on concreteness, how is it that we can also stress movement, roving or travelling? Is not something concrete something which does not move?

Putting aside Platonic undertones hinted at in such reasoning,<sup>25</sup> we must admit that these two points *are* in tension. Instead of introducing a contradiction, however, what arises is a dialectic subtly creative in quality and unavoidable in light of our context. For, if all that was insisted upon in incarnational involvement and participation was an emphasis on concreteness, this would not dictate *our* participation in local communities at all; instead, it would call for the insulation of these communities from the outside world—for, who can be more concrete and non-abstracting in local villages than local villagers themselves? The task would be to wall them off and leave them alone.

But, it seems quite simplistic to assume that all difficulties faced by impoverished, tradition-based communities can be attributed to outside interference. Complications internal to these communities do exist, as we have seen in Karang

---

<sup>25</sup>Where that which is thought to mirror the divine is also that which never changes and never shifts—on Plato's view, a primary quality of the divine is immutability. While a good bit of Christian thought since Aquinas has indeed adopted immutability as a divine attribute, the past century has witnessed many theological writers critiquing such an immutable conception of God as clearly at odds with the biblical view. See Moltmann (1974) for a survey of this change in conception.

Resik. Assistance from the outside is not always a nuisance, especially at times when external resources and partnering are called for.<sup>26</sup> This is the reason for our focus on participation—our possible interaction in another's world. There *is* a place and there *are* times for outside involvement.

However, we must evaluate the precise nature of this outside involvement. The bible is filled with a concern for travelling—in fact, it is depicted as one of the characteristics of God's people in faithfulness to him.<sup>27</sup> The people of God must always be a pilgrim people, since their lord was a pilgrim saviour (cf. Bosch 1991:373).<sup>28</sup>

But, it must be said that not all travelling is of the same variety. At the very least there seem to be at least two types.

First there is the inevitable travelling through time as a people, something which is fated by mere existence and biology, though it is not necessarily willingly embraced by all involved. The picture of the children of Israel in the Pentateuch is a good example of this sort of travelling. In metaphoric terms, this can be seen as a moving from idolatry to the truth, from one approximation to a closer one—though it can just as easily involve movements in the opposite direction. Thus, while it surely includes the normal pilgrimage of life, it is also at times taken up heroically by those

---

<sup>26</sup>Such external resources are not always material in nature—the availability of outside perspective can be a form of external input, one which serves to stimulate alternative voices in a given community, especially those strong in hierarchies and less open to divergent internal opinions.

<sup>27</sup>We can see this in the Old Testament by way of the Children of Israel and their wanderings in the wilderness and in the New Testament by way of a travelling motif apparent (on the part of Jesus) in the Synoptic Gospels. Furthermore, much is made of this theme in the Book of Acts as well as in the third and fourth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews (which emphasises a 'sojourning' component to the Christian faith) (cf. Bosch 1991:373).

<sup>28</sup>See Gooding's commentary on the gospel of Luke (1987) which makes much of the travelling motif in reference to Jesus.



who would live life intentionally in service to others. Such travelling is unavoidable, but it can be done with varying degrees of quality. As we live our lives next to others—irrespective of place or time—we must choose to travel toward them and with them in a manner which takes upon us a fidelity of relationship and a fealty of kinship.

However, there is a second type of travelling, one which is a different breed altogether. It is represented in the travelling of the Son—a sojourn taken up as an act of free choice, from one domain to another, easily rejected and thus costly in its selection. As opposed to the modernist sort of choosing examined above— which seeks to flee trials should they be deemed costly—this sort of choosing embraces certain afflictions in order to open up additional possibilities for the future. This is travelling which requires endurance, which summons strength and vision and a recognition of the worth of self-denial for the sake of a hopeful future—both for self and for others. This was the variety that Jesus referred to when he challenged his followers to ‘...deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me’ (Matt. 16:24 NRSV; cf. Matt. 10:38; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27).

In terms of the six marks, one can detect this latter type of movement most readily in the call to be *flexibly available* and *verifiably emptied*. One can hardly be static and flexible at the same time, nor is it possible to avoid change in the process of being emptied. This being so, we must take upon ourselves a willingness to change, to shift, to travel, if we are to mirror these qualities. Pointing specifically to the church’s pilgrim nature, Bosch observes that

the biblical archetype...is that of the wandering people of God....The church is a pilgrim not simply for the practical reason that in the modern age it no longer calls the tune and is everywhere finding itself

in a diaspora situation; rather, to be a pilgrim in the world belongs intrinsically to the church's ex-centric position. It is *ek-klesia*, 'called out' of the world, and sent back into the world. Foreignness is an element of its constitution... (1991:373-374).

As outsiders in the face of tradition-based communities, we are persons who have left a certain context and are always trying to fit into a new one. The outsider will always be a person in tension. A helpful distinction can be made between the status of an *insider* and that of a *belonger*. An outside participant will forever be a person from a foreign place, one who does not know in the same way that insiders know—an individual who has travelled to the community, seen as having loyalties elsewhere. Even so, the outsider *can* be accepted, received and respected. He or she can belong.

In fact, it is precisely in this posture as an outsider that the pilgrim often does the most good; provided he or she is an outsider who *succeeds* in belonging. As the ancient Chinese proverb puts it, 'it's scarcely a fish that would discover water.' Local residents are often so ensconced in their own realities and world views that they have difficulty in entertaining other possibilities. It is here that a travelling outsider—one who has experienced a context radically different than the one in question—can offer fresh possibilities for living, different ways of framing issues. Insiders can find this a very difficult thing to do.

But, the outsider must be careful in how this alternative perspective is shared. To belong means to experience a certain intimacy with local folk, while to remain an outsider means to participate in a weakened fashion in terms of local status and power—to flexibly empty one's self. As we embrace this, we will offer but not demand, suggest but not dictate. In a word, we will have a chance to participate. In



the process, we will humbly embrace our own weakness—our own errors even when we get things wrong—and this will allow for a coming alongside in the work; concretely belonging as a traveller.

God's pilgrim people need only two things: support for the road, and a destination at the end of it....It has no fixed abode here; it is a *paroikia*, a temporary residence. It is permanently underway, toward the ends of the world and the end of time....Even if there is an unbridgeable difference between the church and its destination—the reign of God—it is called to flesh out, already in the here and now, something of the conditions which are to prevail in God's reign. Proclaiming its own transience the church pilgrimages toward God's future... (Bosch 1991:374).

### *Community*

To frame incarnational involvement as individualistic involvement is to frame it inaccurately. While it is true that the bible presents the incarnation of Christ as an unrepeatable event historically linked to a single individual, the manner in which Jesus' followers are called upon to mirror this is as a collective intimately attached to Christ in an organic manner. Believers are beckoned to become like Christ, to 'follow in his steps' (I Peter 2:21 NRSV)—dependent upon an on-going, mystical relationship with him as sustenance (cf. John 15:4-8). If compared to the rest of the world's great religions, the expectation that an adherent would maintain such a constitutive, living attachment to the original founder of the religion seems unique (Ward 2000:134).

Jesus was, according to Christian belief, the human body and mind of the eternal Christ, and Christ is the one designated to be the deliverer and ruler of the cosmos. Jesus' body was the means by which the Christ was locally present in history, and by which Christ acted in history for the deliverance of humans from sin and death. By analogy, the community of the disciples is designated to be the means by which Christ, the same Christ who was fully manifest in Jesus, continues to

be locally present in history, and by which Christ continues to act to liberate humans from sin and death (Ward 2000:134).

It therefore follows that Christians cannot be Christ's body as atomised individuals. Instead, it is only by being gathered together that they can fulfill his will and mirror his cause, making him locally immanent in the present tense. In biblical terms, they are to become his body in a given place by way of mystical union with his person.

This notion sanctions the call for narrative enactment and social embedment. As Hauerwas reminds us, the narrative nature of the biblical materials can serve as a source of hope when all hope seems to have vanished, since in it '...we are provided with a truthful account of reality that enables us to see our life as more than a succession of events'. We do this incarnationally as

...we learn to locate our story in God's story. That does not mean our life has a singular goal or meaning; rather, the story of God we learn through Christ gives us the skills to go on even when no clear goal is present. We rightly seek neither happiness nor pleasure in themselves; such entities are elusive. Rather we learn happiness and pleasure when we find in a faithful narrative an ongoing and worthy task that is able to sustain our lives (Hauerwas 1983:68).

However, to embrace narrative enactment is not merely to join our personal story to God's story; it is also to couch it in a given community. We attach our history to that of local residents and theirs to ours, thereby becoming vested to them in their midst—a process which, as I stated above, takes time.

Similarly, in social embedment we plant ourselves in the thick of community life so that persons may know us, validate our intentions and keep us accountable to



the aspirations we say we stand for. In the process we become physically located in a tangible community—concretely travelling together as neighbours?<sup>29</sup>

The paradigm elicited in all of this is that of the tabernacle, the image of a concrete, travelling tent of meeting pointing to the presence of God communally situated in the midst of his people (Exodus 40:34-38).

Whenever the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out on each stage of their journey; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day that it was taken up' (verses 36-37 NRSV).

In this we see a people sojourning, travelling behind a presence concretely positioned before their eyes. Such is the picture of participation as defined according to God's purposes. By dwelling in his tent in the midst of his people, God became narratively enacted, residentially near, physically encountered, socially embedded,

---

<sup>29</sup>The communal emphasis in the biblical materials is helpfully underscored in the following: 'A study of the Greek root *koinōn-* in the New Testament reveals that a substantial number of the occurrences of words formed or compounded from it signify, or are in contexts which relate to, actual social and economic relationships between Christians—a far cry from that watery "togetherness" which is the common popular understanding of the term "fellowship." Some examples will make the point. The first consequence of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was a new community who, in "devoting themselves to...the fellowship" (*te koinōnia*; author's translation), shared everything in common (Acts 2:42, 44) and ensured that nobody was in need (4:34). In Rom. 12:13 believers are urged to share hospitality with the saints (*koinōnountes*). In 1 Tim. 6:18 the rich are to be commanded to be "generous" (*koinōnikous*); the same duty is laid on all Christians in Heb. 13:16. Paul refers to this financial collection among the Greek churches for the aid of the Judaeans Christians as "an act of fellowship" (*koinōnian tina*, Rom. 15:26, author's translation) which he justified on the grounds that, if the Gentiles had shared (*ekoinōnēsan*) spiritual blessings from the Jews, they owed it to them to share material blessing (v. 27). The same reciprocal principle applies in the relationship between the teacher and the taught in Gal. 6:6 (*koinōneitō*). Indeed, in commending the Corinthians for their eagerness to share in the financial *koinōnia* collection (2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13), Paul describes it as proof of their *obedience to the gospel*, implying that such concrete economic evidence of fellowship was of the essence of a genuine Christian profession. Is it then coincidental that when Paul's own gospel was accepted as authentic in Jerusalem by means of the "right hand of *koinōnia*," he was immediately asked to "remember the poor"—as if in proof (Gal. 2:9-10)? His collection for the Gentiles did indeed bear out his professed eagerness to honor that gospel fellowship. Likewise, when he thanks God for the Philippians' "partnership in the gospel" (Phil. 1:5), the rest of the letter makes it clear that he is thinking concretely, not just spiritually. They had been partners (*synkoinōnoi*) with Paul (Phil. 1:7) in practical financial support (4:15ff.)' (Wright 1990:112-113).

flexibly available and verifiably emptied in the midst of the nation of Israel.

Incarnational involvement was at the heart of the image of the tabernacle.

But, even with this focus upon the communal nature of incarnation, it is remains widely recognised in theological circles that the establishment of communities *per se* is not the primary motif running throughout the teaching of Jesus; instead, the principal thread which binds the gospels together seems to be the notion of the Kingdom of God.<sup>30</sup> This usually does not clarify much for the contemporary person since the very locution *kingdom* itself generally conjures up for him or her ideas associated with place, i.e., *The Kingdom of Monaco, The Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, The Kingdom of the Saudis*, etc. In contrast, the Greek term *basileia* customarily glossed 'kingdom' in English translations of the Bible more accurately refers to

the *act* of reigning rather than the *place* of reigning; thus in most cases it should be translated as *reign, rule, kingship, or sovereignty*, rather than its usual English rendering, *kingdom*....*The Reign of God* is a technical phrase for the idea of the rule of God over history (Mott 1982:82-83, emphasis in the original).

Bosch sums up the reign of God and its relationship to Jesus's teaching when he says,

in Jesus' ministry...God's reign is interpreted as the expression of God's caring authority over the whole of life. Meanwhile...the counter-forces remain a reality. They continue to declare themselves as the real absolutes. So we remain both impatient and modest. We know that our mission will not usher in God's reign. Neither did Jesus. He inaugurated it but did not bring it to its consummation. Like him, we are called to erect signs of God's ultimate reign—not more, but certainly not less either....As we pray 'your kingdom come!'

---

<sup>30</sup>The literature on the Kingdom of God is so vast that anything approaching an exhaustive list of references is impossible. Of special note are Bright 1953, Ridderbos 1962 and Ladd 1966.



we also commit ourselves to initiate, here and now, approximations and anticipations of God's reign (1991:34-35).<sup>31</sup>

Biblically speaking, by incarnationally engendering these signs, the follower of Jesus announces that God has begun to re-establish his complete rule over history.<sup>32</sup> And one of the main ways this is to be done is by forming communities of peace, justice and love which can serve as 'approximations and anticipations,' as tangible 'signs of God's ultimate reign' in real places amongst real people.

In fact, this seems to have been the goal in the Bible right from the beginning, since the time when Moses led the children of Israel out of bondage.

The reality emerging out of the Exodus is not just a new religion or a new religious idea or vision of freedom but the emergence of a new social community in history, a community that has historical body, that had to devise laws, patterns of governance and order, norms of right and wrong, and sanctions of accountability. The participants in the Exodus found themselves, undoubtedly surprisingly to them, involved in the intentional formation of a *new social community* to

---

<sup>31</sup>Cf. the beginning stanzas of what has come to be known as the *Lord's Prayer* or the *Our Father* (Matt. 6:9-13):

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven. (NRSV)

Thus, through the beauty of Semitic poetry and its distinctive paralleling verse structure, it is clear that what is meant by God's kingdom to come is for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven! In other words, the Kingdom of God is here presented as that which reflects God's desires as these are placed paramount in the earth's value scheme—both those values couched in the hearts of humans as well as those found in the pulse of societies.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. I. Howard Marshall's balanced comments as found in his monograph centered upon Luke-Acts: 'The term kingdom is used mainly of the action of God in intervening in human history to establish His rule. It refers to the action of God rather than to the realm which He establishes, although the latter idea is present in sayings which speak of entering the kingdom, and it finds its background in the apocalyptic expectation of the establishment of God's rule at the End rather than in rabbinic concept of God's eternal rule in heaven with the Torah as the expression of His royal will for His people (although this idea too is not absent from the Gospels). But the concept of *God* ruling is remarkably infrequent in the Gospels, and it is fair to conclude that the emphasis is more upon the Agent of God through whom God's rule is made manifest. There is no doubt that the tradition before Luke regarded Jesus in this manner, and there is every reason to believe that this tradition was accurately representing Jesus' own understanding of His role' (1979:129, emphasis in the original).

match the vision of *God's freedom* (Brueggemann 2001:7, emphasis in the original).

Taking up language both from the Roman Catholic Second Vatican Council and from select World Council of Churches (WCC) documents, one can speak of these communities as the primary (but not exclusive) sacrament of God's kingdom reign—in historical terms, as 'outward and physical signs of an inward and spiritual grace' (utilising the classic definition of the term sacrament).<sup>33</sup>

In fact, the idea can be parsed even further by borrowing from Lesslie Newbigin who, similar to Vatican II and the WCC, divides the function of the sacramental community into three separate categories: the means function, the foretaste function and the sign function (cf. Newbigin 1986:133). In the first function, the goal is for the community to be a conduit of God's kingdom reign in the world; to serve as an instrument for reconciliation, for peace and for justice by way of efforts and acts of community advocacy and involvement. In the second function, the goal is to enter into a reconciled and peace-oriented community at a given time, so that persons can '...taste and see that the Lord is good' (Psalm 34:8 NRSV) in the midst of those who are seeking his will. Thus, the focus here is upon a certain existential experience. The third function is for the community to offer meaning, purpose and direction to persons for their lives. This, in effect, is the promise of a hopeful future by virtue of a renewed story of meaning and destiny embraced by those who have adopted the kingdom narrative as their own. In these three ways kingdom communities are to outwardly and physically signal that a new way of

---

<sup>33</sup>For an examination of the 'church as sacrament' perspective primarily in terms of Vatican II, see Dulles 1988 (especially :63-75); for a World Council of Churches publication comprised of a collection of writings exploring the idea, see Limouris 1986.



living and being together has arrived—that God has visited them incarnationally and has commissioned them to likewise incarnationally and communally ‘...follow in his steps’ (I Peter 2.21 NRSV). As Jesus said, ‘As the Father has sent me, so I send you’ (John 20:21 NRSV).

In this picture of community and its function we are faced once more with a scandalous particularity,<sup>34</sup> with the paradoxically mystical principle of the divine presence in a given location, this time in the midst of a collective of people:<sup>35</sup> *God with us* (cf. Matt. 1:23), participating as a humble servant, is its constitutive nature—it is this which reshapes the nature of this community gathered round the kingdom mandate.

---

<sup>34</sup>See page 99 above.

<sup>35</sup>Baillie in particular makes much of the feature of *paradox* in relation to notions of God and Christ. For instance: ‘What...does the word “God” mean, in its true and full Christian use?’

‘It means something so paradoxical that it is difficult to express in a few words. It means the One who at the same time makes absolute demands upon us and offers freely to *give* us all that He demands. It means the One who requires of us unlimited obedience and then supplies the obedience Himself. It means the One who calls us to work out our own salvation on the ground that “it is He Himself who works both the willing and the working” in our hearts and lives. It is not that He bestows His favour, His grace, upon those who render obedience to His commands. Such divine giving in response to human obedience is a sub-Christian idea, alien to the New Testament; and indeed if God’s grace had to wait for man’s obedience, it would be kept waiting for ever. But the Christian, when he has rendered his fullest and freest obedience, knows well that somehow it was “all of God”, and he says: “It was God not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” This is the Creator-God who made us to be free personalities, and we know that we are most free and personal when He is most in possession of us. This is the God of the moral order who calls us every moment to exercise our full and responsible choice; but He also comes to dwell in us in such a way that we are raised altogether above the moral order into the liberty of the sons of God. That is what Christians mean by “God”. It is highly paradoxical, but it is bound up with the whole message of Christianity and the whole structure of the Christian life; and it follows inevitably if we take seriously the fundamental paradox: “Not I, but the grace of God”, as we are bound to do unless we are content to be Pelagians. It is God’s very nature to give Himself in that way: to dwell in man in such a manner that man, by his own will choosing to do God’s will (and in a sense it must depend on man’s own choice) nevertheless is constrained to confess that it was “all of God”.

‘Such is the conception of God; and therefore it is with such a conception that we must work when we try to understand the Incarnation’ (1948:121-122).

And again: ‘...There is a sense in which we should not expect or attempt to “explain” the Incarnation. Our theological task is to try to make sure that we know what we mean by it, what it means and what it does not mean; to try to make sure that, while it remains the *mysterium Christi*, it is not sheer meaningless mystery, but becomes a truly Christian paradox to us’ (1948:124).

**PAGE  
NUMBERING  
AS ORIGINAL**



## Chapter Four

### Appraising the Incarnational Motif

Twelve years had taught the prisoners to always seek alternative meanings to words. I for one had learned that lesson the first day of my detention when, on October 13, 1965, a military commander made his way through the crowd outside my home and said to me, 'Follow me, sir. I'll take you to safety.' And I had followed that man through the crowd outside my home and to the open-back truck that was waiting for me with my hands tied behind my back, the rope linked with a noose around my neck. A hangman's noose, we had called it during the revolution. Once I was in the truck and the vehicle started moving, one of the guards smashed my face with the metal and wooden butt of his gun. Fortunately I had time to turn away and, in so doing, saved my left eye from injury, but my cheekbone was cracked. At any rate, that is how I came to distrust the obvious meaning of words. Times change, I guess, and so do the meanings of words. The words themselves are not misnomers. Not at all. Blame the old dictionaries for the source of misunderstanding and always be prepared to look for the hidden meanings of words, ones not likely to be found in any standard dictionary (Pramoedya Ananta Toer 1999:321).

Words do have hidden meanings. By definition, language and the emblematic function it serves is an abstraction, a symbolic representation of how we believe (and sometimes hope) things are. But words are notoriously slippery—something we have seen in our description of Karang Resik. Novelist Anthony Burgess has pondered the issue:

We all use words; do we know how tentative, complex, and fundamentally dangerous it is to commit even the simplest statement to the air? A friend says to me, 'I like cats'; I say that I understand his meaning. But once I start to analyze I find myself plunging into a world where things seem neither intelligible nor necessary: what is 'I', what is 'like', what is 'cats'? I am drawn into ontology, psychology, physiology, zoology, and I end doubting the existence of everything, including the possibility of language's possessing any sense-potentialities at all (1975:104).

The point has not been lost on development theorists. Paulo Freire (1989) claims that one of the primary ways in which the poor of the earth are marginalised is by being trapped in a 'culture of silence', with their opinions not listened to nor their

perspectives granted any credence. In the end, they find themselves excluded from virtually all public deliberation and opinion formation, including that directly pertaining to their own situation. Thus speech whirls above their heads and they find themselves more talked *about* than talked *to*. The picture we got of Middle Region residents in Karang Resik certainly accords with this.

In like manner Robert Chambers centres close to half of an editorial contribution to *World Development* journal on the control language has over the manner in which efforts toward development are conceptualised.<sup>1</sup> In the process he warns that

...the power of vocabulary to change how we think and what we do is easy to underestimate. It influences the course of development in many ways: through changing the agenda; through modifying mindsets; through legitimating new actions; and through stimulating and focusing research and learning (1997a:1744).

Development economist Manfred Max-Neef makes a very similar point when he reminds us that

to every system of knowledge corresponds a given language. Such a language can give rise to what I would like to identify as a 'domestication effect', whenever it manages to permeate the forms of expression of every day life. In such a process, language influences (determines?) both behaviour and perception. To be more precise, the key words of language become 'justifiers', in the sense that only their invocation is needed to justify a given behaviour, or generate a certain perception (1990:5).

As we examine the concept of participation below we will notice this to be one of its primary problems. Since the image has now been adopted so widely as a

---

<sup>1</sup>For an examination of this in terms of shifting connotations of the term 'development' in the English language, see H. W. Arndt's article 'Economic Development: A Semantic History' (1981).



worthwhile human goal in social and political affairs,<sup>2</sup> the term participation often come to justify a wide variety of 'top-down' activities attempted in its name, with the label domesticating and taming all counter-discourse, rendering ineffective all means of challenge and repudiation not sponsored by top-down motivators. As a result, a common accusation levelled against participatory approaches is that they are spurious in quality—masquerading as egalitarian when, in fact, that played out on the ground evinces few authentic characteristics of community involvement and co-operation. In short, it is claimed that the term—and the concept with it—has been coopted and detached from bona fide forms of representative empowerment. Surely this *is* often the case.<sup>3</sup>

A good bit of the reason for this tendency can be found in the abstracting nature of language. The aim of a symbol system is to select, cull and rarefy from a vast terrain of stimuli in order to convey intent. Thus, language by definition outlines in broad strokes. A speaker or a writer must abridge from the abundance of sensory data confronting him or her in order to communicate. Consequently, there is always a stepping away from the absolutely concrete—a speaking of matters in

---

<sup>2</sup>After all, who in their right mind would have the audacity these days to claim for their work a *non-participatory* status?

<sup>3</sup>Cf. the following from Rahman and Fals-Borda which makes reference to this process in relation to a widening acceptance of *Participatory Action-Research* (PAR): '...Formerly sceptic or contemptuous eyes were increasingly turned to PAR experiences. Criticism of "dualism," "modernization" and "development" ideologies grew. There was more tolerance and understanding, and the gate was open for cooptation gestures by the "Establishment" as well as for convergence with colleagues sympathetic with our postulates but who had taken different points of departure. As our approach gained respectability, many officials and researchers began to claim that they were working with PAR when in actuality they were doing something quite different. This challenged us to sharpen the conceptions so that there was no confusion, to develop defense responses against cooptation and to dilute manipulations by established institutions. Of course, cooptation appears to be a natural process since it has affected any worthwhile principle of social life, such as democracy, cooperation and socialism, and is in fact a measure of the popular appeal of such principles' (1991:27-28).

encapsulated form in lieu of experiencing them directly<sup>4</sup>—a constant toying with ‘the fallacy of misplaced concreteness’.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is essential that we take up styles of development practice which promise to keep the abstraction process in check—styles *concrete* in logic. One of the values of the incarnational motif is that it demands such.

In this chapter I will utilise the template fashioned above in order to undertake a brief survey of four streams of thought which often advocate participatory approaches in their own right. I will begin by looking at (1) the discipline of development studies proper—primarily focussing my attention on Robert Chambers and the methodology of *Participatory Rural Appraisal*;<sup>6</sup> (2) the discipline of anthropology—primarily focussing upon the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz; (3) the discipline of the political and social work theorist—examining the work of Jürgen Habermas as a window into the field; and (4) the perspective of a progressive Indonesian Islamic theorist—focussing upon Abdurrahman Wahid, former president of Indonesia, as representative. With each I will give a brief overview of the thinker, attempting to locate common ground between theories they put forward and my own notion of incarnational development. Thereafter I will also critically

---

<sup>4</sup>Michael Polanyi asserts that all knowledge is fashioned by way of encounter—from a submersed ‘indwelling’ of the world of sensory data in order to know ‘personally’. See *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Postcritical Philosophy* (1958) and *The Tacit Dimension* (1967).

<sup>5</sup>The point is illustrated by the format of the volume edited by Wolfgang Sachs entitled *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992). Each chapter in the book—which amounts to a stinging critique of a good deal of development as it is undertaken today—centres on the analysis of a specific word as its touch point, with each author critiquing the collection of paradigms and hypotheses borne by his or her assigned word.

<sup>6</sup>The nomenclature seems to be in a bit of flux. *Participatory Rural Appraisal* or PRA, since it is not limited to rural regions nor is it centred on mere appraisal, is now frequently referred to as *Participatory Learning and Action*, or PLA. In these chapters I will stay with the designation PRA in order to avoid confusion.



appraise each by accenting shortfalls when these are judged by the incarnational image of participation I have proffered above. To round out the picture, I will glance at the way in which this incarnational motif is capable—by virtue of the image of praxis it evokes—of being placed along-side these four sub-disciplines and their own notions of participatory involvement. I hope to find incarnational common ground by highlighting prior hints of the incarnational perspective in each coupled with critique of each discipline—highlighting deficiencies as underscored by our newly fashioned adjudicating template of participation. All of this should buttress my advocacy of the incarnational motif as motivator and emblem for development practice.

In the course of my analysis, I will seek to demonstrate that there is more to such a coupling than a simple concoction of various techniques of development praxis, i.e., those deemed most *incarnational*. What we will end up with is a thorough-going critique of much outside participatory involvement undertaken in tradition-based communities of impoverishment, seeing as how it generally issues forth in unequal power differentials. I believe this critique holds irrespective of our goals as outsiders; whether framed in terms of poverty-alleviation, ethnographic understanding, the comparative study of religions, or more baldly, in order to prop up government programmes centred on policy fashioning and nation-building. In fact, various forms of ‘neutral’ information-gathering techniques and endeavours are rendered suspect even when they do take up ‘participative’ approaches,<sup>7</sup> often due to the logic subsumed in their disciplinary design, rendering them systematically bent

---

<sup>7</sup> That is, if they do actually opt for ‘participative’ postures at all. The kinds of approaches I have in mind here are participant observation, ethnographic interviewing and a various assortment of other social science techniques and tools.

on controlling, distancing, reporting and ‘neutral’ observation.<sup>8</sup> In the language developed below, I maintain that these efforts need a dose of incarnational involvement. However, before such a claim can be asserted, a good deal of ground needs first to be covered. With this in mind, it is now time to put the paradigm to work.

*An Examination of the Notion of Incarnational Participation in Relation to Development Practice-Robert Chambers and Participatory Rural Appraisal*

The closer program leaders come to living as the villagers do—the more we can leave behind our cities, towns, embassy crowds, and missionary compounds—the better our work will be. It is only when we have spent all day stooped over while transplanting rice in flooded paddies, when we have raced out into the family courtyard to rescue drying millet from a sudden rain, when we have survived for days on nothing but boiled field corn, and when we have fallen in love with the villagers’ enchanting children, that we can come to speak with the villagers’ vocabulary, understand their priorities, and fathom their feelings and wants. And it is only then that they will truly come to trust us (Bunch 1982:54).

Springing from the work of activist participatory research,<sup>9</sup> agroecosystem analysis, applied anthropology, field research on farming systems, and its primary predecessor *Rapid Rural Appraisal* (Chambers 1994a:954-958 and 1994c:1437), *Participatory Rural Appraisal* (hereafter PRA) is most readily associated with the University of Sussex’s Institute for Development Studies (IDS) and with one of its most celebrated faculty members, Robert Chambers. Although Chambers insists that the basket of theories and methodologies colligated under the heading of PRA arose primarily from the field by way of experimentation on the part of non-government

---

<sup>8</sup>If pursued this would lead us to the now common critique of *foundationalism*. I do not have the space in this paper to prosecute such a critique, but persons such as Jürgen Habermas, Richard Rorty and Hans-Georg Gadamer have written copiously on the topic.

<sup>9</sup>Based primarily on the writings of Paulo Freire 1973, 1985 and 1989 and Ivan Illich 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1983; see Goulet 1989:165 and Chambers 1997b:106.



organisations—thereafter spreading laterally in the non-Western milieu from agency to agency and practitioner to practitioner (1994c:1440-1441)<sup>10</sup>—no one really questions that it is Chambers who has served as the cheerleader and clearinghouse for this approach. At the very least, he has officiated the collation and systematising of the methodology.

As its name demonstrates, PRA seeks to be unabashedly participatory. While it arose out of much of the earlier work just cited, one can get insight into the objectives of PRA by examining a common outcome it is designed to forestall, namely, a bias toward urban contexts and what Chambers describes as *rural development tourism*—‘the phenomenon of the brief rural visit’ (1983:10). He describes it this way:

The visitor sets out late, delayed by last minute business, by colleagues, by subordinates or superiors anxious for decisions or actions before his departure, by a family crisis, by a cable or telephone call, by others taking part in the same visit, by mechanical or administrative problems with vehicles, by urban traffic jams, or by any one of a hundred forms of human error. Even if the way is not lost, there is enough fuel, and there are no breakdowns, the programme runs behind schedule. The visitor is encapsulated, first in a limousine, Landrover, Jeep or car and later in a moving entourage of officials and local notables—headmen, chairmen of village committees, village accountants, progressive farmers, traders, and the like.

Whatever their private feelings, (indifferent, suspicious, amused, anxious, irritated, or enthusiastic), the rural people put on their best face and receive the visitor well. According to ecology, economy and culture, he is given goats, garlands, coconut milk, coca-cola, coffee, tea or milk. Speeches are made. Schoolchildren sing or clap. Photographs are taken. Buildings, machines, construction works, new crops, exotic animals, the clinic, the school, the new road,

---

<sup>10</sup>Cf. these statements by Chambers: ‘The principles of RRA and PRA have been induced rather than deduced: they have been elicited by trying out practices, finding what works and what does not, and then asking why’ (1994b:1254) and ‘the spread of PRA...has been lateral more than vertical, personal more than official, and experiential more than didactic....It appears to have been adopted, adapted and developed because it has been seen to fill a need’ (1994c:1440).

are all inspected. A self-conscious group (the self-help committee, the women's handicraft class), dressed in their best clothes, are seen and spoken to. They nervously respond in ways which they hope will bring benefits and avoid penalties. There are tensions between the visitor's questions and curiosity, the officials' desire to select what is to be seen, and the mixed motives of different rural groups and individuals who have to live with the officials and with each other after the visitor has left. Time and an overloaded programme nevertheless are on the officials' side. As the day wears on and heats up, the visitor becomes less inquisitive, asks fewer questions, and is finally glad to retire, exhausted and bemused, to the circuit bungalow, the rest house, the guest house, the host official's residence, or back to an urban home or hotel. The village returns to normal, no longer wearing its special face. When darkness falls and people talk more freely, the visitor is not there (1983:11-12).

According to Chambers, *Rural Development Tourism* is aided and abetted by six rural poverty biases (1983:13-23):

- (1) **Spatial Bias** – with the rural development tourist (hereafter RDT) rarely venturing out of the city, and when he does, he stays to the tarmac and the roadside;
- (2) **Project Bias** – with the RDT calling on only 'showpiece' projects;
- (3) **Person Bias** – with the RDT meeting only with village heads, males, village elite, or with users and adopters of a promoted innovation;
- (4) **Dry Season Bias** – with the RDT visiting only during the dry season, thus never knowing what villagers face during what is commonly the most difficult time of the year;
- (5) **Diplomatic Bias** – with the RDT being received in an atmosphere of obsequiousness (due to a combination of courtesy, intimidation and cowardice on the part of persons involved); and
- (6) **Professional Bias** – with RDTs 'look[ing] for and find[ing] what fits their ideas' (1983:23), since they generally ask questions dictated by their respective discipline (which might not be the only one pertinent to the problems at hand).

It seems that after recognising these biases and their side-effects, Chambers and his extensive network of colleagues and co-workers around the globe set out to



identify research and empowerment methodologies which were not subject to these pitfalls. What arose out of this was the PRA methodology. The goal was to shift priorities in development praxis, with a focus being placed on ‘...people first’ in order to reflect the ‘...massive shift in priorities and thinking ...taking place, from things and infrastructure to people and capabilities’(1997b:9). In short, the central ethos which guided PRA—especially at its earliest phases—was a maxim lifted from American management specialist Tom Peters (1989:378): ‘use your own best judgement at all times’(as cited in Chambers 1994a:959, 1994c:1450 and 1997b:197).<sup>11</sup> The focus was on establishing and maintaining trust with local village residents, realising that ‘...local people have capabilities of which outsiders have been largely, or totally, unaware’ (Chambers 1997b:131).<sup>12</sup> Modes, methods and

---

<sup>11</sup>Chambers characterises this as a ‘one-sentence manual’ (1994b:1255 and 1994c:1442, 1450). In contrast to an early rather ‘anti-written manual’ phase, these days several manuals have indeed been produced in a variety of languages (Chambers 1994a:959). However, Chambers stresses the dangers of manuals in serving to ‘...standardize and codify, often in the name of quality’ and, as a result, serving to ‘inhibit and intimidate. With any new approach or method, [handbooks] are short to start with but grow fast. Paragraphs proliferate as intelligent authors seek to cater for every condition and contingency’ (1994c:1441)

<sup>12</sup>In his most recent book James Scott makes a very similar point. The entirety of his critique is aimed at a certain variety of development theorising significantly comparable to Korten’s ‘blue-print’ image referred to in Chapter Two (page 34ff). In place of such ‘thin, schematic model[s] of social organization and production’ (1998:310; reference to ‘thin’ models of social organisation immediately conjures up Clifford Geertz’s thesis on ‘thick description’; *vide* Geertz 1973:3-30), Scott advocates an increased respect for local, practical knowledge—what he labels *meṓs*, a term he appropriates from classical Greek:

‘*Meṓs* is typically translated into English as “cunning” or “cunning intelligence.” While not wrong, this translation fails to do justice to the range of knowledge and skills represented by *meṓs*. Broadly understood, *meṓs* represents a wide array of practical skills and acquired intelligence in responding to a constantly changing and human environment. Odysseus’s *meṓs* was in evidence, not only in his deceiving of Circe, the Cyclops, and Polyphemus and in binding himself to the mast to avoid the Sirens, but also in holding his men together, in repairing his ship, and in improvising tactics to get his men out of one tight spot after another. The emphasis is both on Odysseus’s ability to adapt successfully to a constantly shifting situation *and* on his capacity to understand, and hence outwit, his human and divine adversaries’ (1998:313, emphasis in the original).

Elsewhere Scott asserts: ‘*meṓs* resists simplification into deductive principles which can successfully be transmitted through book learning, because the environments in which it is exercised are so complex and nonrepeatable that formal procedures of rational decision making are impossible to apply’ (1998:316).

(continued...)

techniques of research design, data collection and tabulation were established, with tools utilised coming in three primary varieties: (1) a collection of visualized analyses, (2) interviewing and sampling methods, and (3) group and team dynamics methods (Chambers 1994a:959). The emphasis has been upon a variety of what Chambers calls 'reversals', such as the use of open-ended questionnaires, evaluation strategies stressing comparisons as opposed to precise measuring, group participation as over and against a concern with individual informants, the utilisation of visual and not simply verbal analysis, *et alia* (see Chambers 1997b:147ff.) Finally, an important component to the PRA approach is found in the distinctive term *triangulation* (1994b:1254 and 1997b:157). With this what is meant is an intentional pluralising of three different components to the PRA activity. Firstly, a plurality of outside actors involved in the work is sought so as to gain multiple insights and perspectives—generally, there is an attempt to recruit an equal mix of males and females, those representing various disciplinary backgrounds and those in different age brackets so as to more widely cover different outside perspectives. Secondly, a plurality of local actors and sub-communities are engaged, in essence for the same reason as that above (and with an attempt at inclusiveness outlined by the same categories as well). Thirdly, a variety of PRA research techniques are employed so as to come at the issues from different angles.

---

<sup>12</sup>(...continued)

Scott seems to yoke the demise of *metax*s in non-Western development contexts to a parallel diminution of religiously steeped world-views in those places and a corresponding heightened regard for the so-called *scientific* method and its own priestly caste: 'Order and harmony that once seemed the function of a unitary God [has] been replaced by a similar faith in the idea of progress vouch-safed by scientists, engineers, and planners' (1998:342). This is a shift which itself further serves to distance Western development practitioners' cognitive worlds from the vast majority of those amongst whom they wish to work; i.e., the tradition-based, more religiously-inclined poor.



All of the methods just described have been preferred with the expressed purpose of maximising both discernment and the power of evaluation as well as the level of participation and ownership on the part of local village residents in the process of discovery and discernment.

Even in an initial comparison of PRA with our incarnational motif one can see the virtue in all of this. There seems to have been an honest attempt of some integrity to focus on tangible participation in the development process. A concern for allowing voiceless members of the local population speak and for adapting techniques of involvement to local abilities and preferences runs throughout the PRA literature.

But, Chambers's work has come under fire of late. There has been concern over PRA's rather simplistic focus on local communities, which critics say runs the risk of romanticising local communities while it also does not address the impact either of local structural inequalities nor of those extant at national or international levels (Mohan and Stokke 2000). Furthermore, the charge has been sharpened by pointing to PRA's weaknesses in relation to environmental (Kapoor 2001) as well as to gender issues (Mosse 1994 and Mayoux 1995). The latter charge is especially incriminating since achievement in matters gender-related has been a claim Chambers and others have often made for PRA. Nonetheless, a not insignificant amount of the evidence points to the fact that, by emphasising dialogue in the public square without tangible institutional procedures for just and uncoerced debate, women can be marginalised by virtue of their diminished positions in local communities.

A helpful overview of PRA weaknesses can be achieved by surveying a representative volume of criticism entitled *Participation The New Tyranny?* (Cooke and Kothari 2001a), a work which arose out of a conference on the issue at the University of Manchester. While I will add to this by commenting on some other appraisals of Chambers's thought as well, this seems a very good place to begin.

To my mind, the book's critique can be broadly placed under two primary headings. The first category are what I judge to be legitimate misgivings. The authors identify Chambers's lack of nuance in wrestling with definitions of 'community', resulting in a lack of attention to pre-existing communal discord, opposition, injustice and conflict within what is defined as a community,<sup>13</sup> a dearth of genuine evaluation and enacted self-critique (though self-critique rhetoric is definitely present) and a naïve celebration of the quantity and accuracy of data collection carried out over spans of time inordinately short without rigorous means for verification of validity and/or reliability.

As a commentary on the first aspect above, Mohan and Stokke—in an article separate from the book cited above—warn of the 'dangers of localism'. Admitting that approaches focussed upon local contexts '...hold out the promise of bringing

---

<sup>13</sup>This critique is more or less the primary complaint levelled against the paradigm of structural-functionalism, a social science paradigm which has taken a sound beating in the literature for the last thirty years; cf. *inter alia*, Kearney 1984 and Harris 1979. Specifically in reference to this aspect of Chambers's theory, Mohan and Stokke describe it as 'a harmony model of power' (2000:249). Chambers does comment upon the complex and diverse internal make-up of local communities (1997b:183-187), but his only recommendation is for the PRA motivator to be aware of this factor. He offers no suggestions as to how one can methodologically deal with it—in fact, he even seems to skirt the issue by warning us that 'there is a limit...to how far the analysis of difference can and should go. It may be essential to find those who are excluded, and to bring them into a participatory process, or help them to generate their own...[but]...the challenge is to sequence and balance a coming together around common interests, and recognize and support diversity, complexity and multiple realities to empower those who are weaker and excluded' (1997b:187).



about more localised, relevant and, ultimately, sustainable development' (2000:249), they nevertheless caution against two dangerous by-products.

One obvious problem is the tendency to essentialise and romanticise 'the local'. This means that local social inequalities and power relations are downplayed. Another problem is the tendency to view 'the local' in isolation from broader economic and political structures. This means that the contextuality of place, eg [*sic*] national and translational [*sic*] economic and political forces, is underplayed. Following from these observations, we argue that studies of local development should pay more attention to the politics of the local, ie [*sic*] to the hegemonic production and representation of 'the local' in counter-hegemonic collective mobilisation (2000:249).

As an antidote to the second risk, the authors call for a transgressing of the boundaries of local, national and global in terms of scale (2000:250). With this, there will be a concern for structural factors and observed local fissures will not be detached *a priori* from possible engendering or aggravating complications at the regional, national or international level.

Kapoor (2002) has detected this tendency too. He sees Chambers's disregard for causes wider than the local community as a by-product of a fixation on the local and empirical and a disregard for the theoretical. Since Chambers claims a sort of metaphysical innocence for PRA (by posing it as a practice forged purely through inductive practice and a concern for 'what works'), it is '...insufficiently theorised and politicised. Questions about inclusiveness, the role of PRA facilitators, and the personal behaviour of elites overshadow, or sometimes ignore, questions of legitimacy, justice, power and the politics of gender and difference' (2002:102-103).<sup>14</sup> These are forces wider in scope than the community alone—factors not easily

---

<sup>14</sup>Kapoor succinctly explains his misgivings in the following way: 'Empiricism has political ramifications, too. To privilege "what is" is often to unquestioningly accept the status quo, for instance a situation of gender or social inequality. The lack of a critical stance can mean simplifying  
(continued...)

confronted at the local level. This became clear for me in Karang Resik, where social upheaval of the worst kind at the national level in 1965 gave impetus to a parallel stigmatising and subjugation of *Hakekat* residents. A certain naïveté insists that a nexus does not exist virtually everywhere between national (and international) politics and local, impoverished populations. What we need is the actuation of participation methodologies which possess potential for satisfactorily handling this nexus.

As to the problem of romanticising (cf. Mohan 2001:160) and idealising local communities, Paul Francis—one of the contributors to *New Tyranny?*—illustrates the issue by stressing PRA's neglect of social differentiation in group gatherings.

[Anthropologist W. P.] Murphy's...analysis on Mende public discourse shows that the appearance of community consensus may be just that—an appearance. Through local and private exegesis of what is said at public meetings, Murphy concludes that the orchestration of a public consensual order is an achievement that frequently conceals, rather than resolves, alternative orders of opposition. While some PRA techniques, such as wealth ranking, do explore differentiation and inequality within the community, the practice, if not the theory, of much PRA consists in the elucidation of 'community priorities' or 'community plans'. PRA emphasizes the creation of conditions for good communication *between* investigator and community in spite of differences in status between them (which are seen as the major causes of 'bias'). However, differences *within* communities may be as critical. It seems naive to assume that, simply by wishing themselves into a 'participatory stance', investigators will be able to lead the community in transcending historically and culturally rooted differences and conflicts between genders, factions, castes and occupational groups within a few hours or days (2001:79).

---

<sup>14</sup>(...continued)

or ignoring broader relationships between, say, local communities and socioeconomic power structures. Similarly, to privilege "what works and what does not" is to downplay such important political questions as "what works for whom?" and "whose interests are being served?" The danger of fetishising practice is that it tends to posit a "pure" practice that can proceed without bias or theoretical abstractions, independent of, and unfettered by, political concerns about justice and legitimacy. One would be hard pressed to *induce* any meaningful practice from a situation of socioeconomic inequality or exclusion, let alone inducing a "just" or "legitimate" practice' (2002:102).



Chambers simply does not address conflict internal to local communities in a sufficient manner. It is as if all local conflict was, on the one hand, quite minor and could therefore be dealt with through large doses of PRA-advocated listening, sensitivity and politeness or, on the other hand, had its genesis in outside sources which could be managed simply by insulating the community from external interference. In opposition to this, my own experience in Karang Resik confronted me with on-going internal animosities historically present in the community, conjoined to grave inequities played out on the national stage. The result was an entrenchment of internal disparity for Middle Region residents due to its now-validated status at the national level. In the end, the ingredients were *both* national as well as autochthonic to the community itself.<sup>15</sup>

It is especially odd that, while Chambers himself recognises that local configurations can be disguised from outsiders, he does not seem to realise that PRA motivators are susceptible to such innocence. But how could this be, especially seeing as how, by design, PRA personnel do not remain in the village for any length

---

<sup>15</sup>While class structure analysis might first spring to mind as a tool suited to this type of mix, there *is* an alternative approach for examining conflict impacting tradition-based communities. James Scott—in an article focussed upon Southeast Asia—advocates a probe of patron-client alliances (similar to that found in Chapter Two above) so that prior conflicts latent in local contexts might be flushed out and identified. He claims that such an approach is more appropriate to traditional societies than is one based upon Marxist class analysis since it ‘...comes much closer to matching the “real” categories subjectively used by the people being studied [and thus] emphasizes primordial sentiments (such as ethnicity, language, and religion), rather than horizontal class ties. Being more reflective of self-identification, the primordial model naturally helps to explain the tension and conflict that increasingly occurred as these isolated, ascriptive groups came into contact and competed for power. Like the class model, however—although less well developed theoretically—the primordial model is largely a conflict model and is of great value in analyzing hostilities between more or less corporate and ascriptive cultural groupings. Important as such conflict has been, it hardly begins to exhaust the political patterns of Southeast Asia and Africa, let alone Latin America. If we are to account, say for intra-ethnic politics or for patterns of cooperation and coalition building *among* primordial groups, then the primordial model cannot provide us with much analytical leverage’ (1972:91).

It must be said, a good bit more analytical ground work focussed upon patronage has been laid since Scott penned his article—for instance, that undertaken by Eisenstadt and Roniger (1981 and 1984). Chambers would do well to methodologically address these alliances from within his PRA model.

of time? There seems to be a measure of naïveté at work here<sup>16</sup>—could it be due to a certain fallacy of misplaced concreteness—with an abstract view of the poor substituting for the concrete complexities of life in the local village? I personally see this as caused by the short period of involvement advocated by PRA as a methodology. We will return to this below when we analyse PRA with our six marks of the incarnational approach.

We may now turn to the second type of critique found in the book, one I see as mostly specious. A few of the contributors to *Participation The New Tyranny?* seem to relish criticising Chambers, grasping at virtually any shortcoming they feel they can lay their hands on.<sup>17</sup> In the process, their accusations often ring hollow, frequently underscoring their own lack of attention to the full body of Chambers's writings on PRA. For instance, Giles Mohan claims that Chambers sets '...the "poor"...against an unspecified "elite" whose only defining feature is their "non-poorness"' (2001:160). But, is this true? Surely it is difficult to square this with Chambers's description of Rural Development Tourism in which, instead of a vacuously negative, polarised identity defined entirely in terms of its antonym the

---

<sup>16</sup>Kothari makes a very similar point: '...The almost exclusive focus on the micro-level, on people who are considered powerless and marginal, has reproduced the simplistic notion that the sites of social power and control are to be found solely at the macro- and central levels. These dichotomies further strengthen the assumption that people who wield power are located at institutional centres, while those who are subjugated and subjected to power are to be found at the local or regional level—hence the valorization of 'local knowledge' and the continued belief in the empowerment of 'local' people through participation' (2001:140).

<sup>17</sup>This may simply underscore a cynical attitude often cultivated these days in academic circles. Lasch comments on it in the following way: 'I think students are...put off by the prevailing mode of cultural criticism, which easily degenerates into a "species of cynicism," as Kimball say, "for which nothing is properly understood until it is exposed as corrupt, duplicitous, or hypocritical"' (1995:187).



'poor', the 'non-poor' (not Chambers's term) are characterised quite specifically and elaborately in terms of several development tourist biases.

Worse yet, other authors seem to take for granted that a knee-jerk charge against Chambers that he espouses '...quasi-religious associations of participatory rhetoric and practice' (Cooke and Kothari 2001b:14) amounts to a self-evident and blistering criticism. But does this point to a critique of Chambers, or is it rather an implicit critique of some of the authors of the book, baldly bringing to surface Western, modernist biases against all publically held religious beliefs and convictions? And, ironically, could not the same criticism be levelled at the vast majority of poor residents living in villages and communities in the non-west, i.e., those with whom we wish to partner? After all, they tend to be quite a religious lot themselves.

This type of commentary is especially evident in the volume's final chapter, entitled 'Participation as Spiritual Duty; Empowerment as Secular Subjection'. The authors undertake what—especially towards the end of the essay—degenerates into an *ad hominem* caricature, with Chambers portrayed in terms overtly redolent of a manipulative televangelist or a scheming cult leader. For example:

...It seems to us that Chambers is advocating an approach to development that is remarkably akin to what is conventionally called 'religion'. One is continually reminded of Geertzian notions of religion as a model of and a model for behaviour; of the importance of morality and personal conversion....This is evident not only in Chambers' writings but also in the workshops he runs or is involved in. Attendance at these events is in many ways reminiscent of revivalist religious meetings. Participants are encouraged (one might say forced) to think in particular ways; control is exercised in such a way that participants appear to be controlling themselves; individuals attest to their conversion; sinners admit their faults before they saw the light (Henkel and Stirrat 2001:177-178).

The authors appear to want to soften the lampoon in the next couple of paragraphs<sup>18</sup> but the reader can hardly shake free from the negative image already presented.

It is odd that many of the authors of this book should react so against what they take to be Chamber's religiously steeped, dyadic language of 'uppers' versus 'lowers', 'insiders versus 'outsiders', and various other 'upside-down society' (1994b:1450; 1997b:60) concepts, seeing as how they themselves make much of the archaeology of power inequitably held—a style of critique which generally leans quite heavily on neo-structuralist analysis concerned with dissecting polarised dyads.<sup>19</sup>

But there may be an answer to this puzzle. Could it be that, due to anti-Christian bias, these authors are viscerally reacting to what we might recognise as obvious parallels between the incarnational motif and the PRA model as Chambers presents it? They themselves underscore similarities between its focus on 'reversals' and a theme running throughout '...the Christian tradition', namely "'The World Turned Upside Down'" ethic (2001:177).<sup>20</sup> Such a response should not surprise

---

<sup>18</sup>For instance, they go on to say, 'of course, this is all somewhat unfair, and in many ways Chambers' work represents what we would agree is a major change for the better in development thinking. But then, we too share something of Chambers' religious outlook. And while Chambers is remarkably open about the provisional nature of his methods and the need for continual rethinking of concepts and methods, not so many of his followers, who have in effect "routinized" the teachings of the prophet' (2001:178).

But if unfair, why put it this way? Why not say it fairly? And, with co-religionists like these, who needs enemies? Also, how does one square a person said to be 'remarkably open and provisional' in nature with a picture of that same person depicted as controlling and scheming? The final statement does not resonate at all with the images used only a few paragraphs before; the mesmerising revivalist in seminar events depicted by Henkel and Stirrat was not one of Chambers's followers, it was specifically Chambers himself, owing to his unique qualities as a presenter. This underscores the sense of *ad hominem* in the article.

<sup>19</sup>This examination is usually done by way of Foucauldian analysis; for instance, see Hailey 2001:98.

<sup>20</sup>Such an ethic, in Christian terms, has often been advocated by those from *Anabaptist* circles. Representative here would be Yoder (1972), Sider (1990), Nigel Wright (1986) and Kraybill (continued...)



us—they are simply falling into the time-honoured critique of religion which sees it as unavoidably conservative and status quo-protecting. As we shall see below, even someone as perceptive as Jürgen Habermas seems to fall prey to the same tendency.

Nonetheless, not all Western commentators make this mistake. Political scientist and anthropologist James Scott has in fact emphasised the ubiquitous nature of the theme of religious reversals (1990:166ff.), describing it as a ‘weapon of the weak’ embraced by peasant resisters when engaged in ‘everyday forms of peasant resistance’ in the face of those bearing down with considerable coercive force (cf. Scott 1985.)<sup>21</sup> Scott claims that, as opposed to functioning as an opiate for passive acquiescence and a compliant waiting for salvation in the ‘sweet by and by’, the theme just as often functions as subtle political critique and a testing of the limits of oppression and control, until such time—deemed appropriate by local actors—as it can well up into what Scott describes as ‘a saturnalia of power; the first public declaration of the hidden transcript’ (for which, see the title of the last chapter 1990:202).<sup>22</sup> In Christian terms, Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann points

---

<sup>20</sup>(...continued)  
(1990); note the title of Kraybill’s work: *The Upside-Down Kingdom*.

<sup>21</sup>For Scott’s take on these sorts of mechanisms, see his *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (1976; note especially what Scott describes as a ‘safety first’ ethic) as well as both *Weapons of the Weak — Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (1985) and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance — Hidden Transcripts* (1990). The latter is essentially a universalised application of the former, the thesis of which was hammered out during field work in Malaysia in the early 80s. In general, Scott’s premise in these two works states that, in contrast to much social science theorising (especially that of the Leninist-Marxist variety), ‘everyday forms of peasant resistance’ tend not to be frontal nor overtly contentious but instead mostly appear covertly off-the-record, *Janus*-faced, and thus pursued incognito behind the backs of those communally external to these persons’ inner circle. This being the case, such clandestine varieties of defiance seem intentionally open to multiple public interpretations, providing for these same poor residents opportunities to nimbly deny the counteraction flavour of their actions if and when they find it expedient to do so; say, in the face of opposition from employer, overseer or tyrant. In more than one place, Scott metaphorically dubs such responses ‘foot dragging’.

<sup>22</sup>As is probably obvious from our discussion in Chapter Two, Scott’s field work carried out in Malaysia bears many striking resemblances to what I have found in Indonesia, especially in relation  
(continued...)

to much the same when he claims that there is always an other-worldly, anti-scientific nature to the language of hope—a commodity the poor can scarcely do without.<sup>23</sup>

It is mind-boggling to think of the public expression of hope as a way of subverting the dominant royal embrace of despair. I am not talking about optimism or development or evolutionary advances but rather about promises made by one who stands distant from us and over and against us but remarkably *for us*. Speech about hope cannot be explanatory and scientifically argumentative; rather, it must be lyrical in the sense that it touches the hopeless person at many different points. More than that, however, speech about hope must be primarily theological, which is to say that it must be in the language of covenant between a personal God and a community. Promise belongs to the world of trusting speech and faithful listening. It will not be reduced to the ‘cool’ language of philosophy or the private discourse of psychology. It will finally be about God and us, about his faithfulness that vetoes our faithlessness. Those who would be prophetic will need to embrace that absurd practice and that subversive activity (2001:65).

Even so, Brueggemann is not content to simply underscore the notion of hope. He also relates the notion to a prophetic critique of the status quo—a vision

---

<sup>22</sup>(...continued)

to the underground nature of most peasant resistance. This, according to Scott, is a globally pervasive phenomenon in tradition-based, peasant communities (see Scott 1990).

One distinctive similarity between the two countries relates directly to the relationship of this feature to certain local cultural regulations and taboos, namely, the Southeast Asian concern for public protocol, order and the recognition of status (of which the above-described *Mandatory Decorum of Acara* is an outgrowth). As Woodward puts it, ‘...what is not said, or what is said only by implication, is often at least as important as what is said directly. There are linguistic and political reasons for the prevalence of indirect speech in public discourse. In Java, and increasingly in Indonesia, direct speech is considered to be crude (*J. kasar*) and insulting. It can also be dangerous. In a political context, where direct criticism of authority is limited, Muslim preachers and authors often invoke the prophetic ideal to critique current social and political conditions. Discussions of texts and sermons with Javanese informants indicate that covert messages are often transparent. Many are capable of locating political messages in what, to less discerning ears, appears to be soteriological discourse’ (1993:567).

<sup>23</sup>This relates to my comments in Chapter Three on the relationship of the narrative quality of life and the concept of hope—life can hardly be lived narratively without the notion of hope, since narrative implies an opening up of one’s life to possibilities awaiting us in the future, i.e., in time.



birthed in the face of power via countervailing resistance biblically exemplified in the disruptive message of the Hebrew prophet.

In the imperial world of Pharaoh and Solomon, the prophetic alternative is a bad joke either to be squelched by force or ignored in satiation. But we are a haunted people because we believe the bad joke is rooted in the character of God himself, a God who is not the reflection of Pharaoh or of Solomon. He is a God with a name of his own, which cannot be uttered by anyone but him. He is not the reflection of any, for he has his own person and retains that all to himself. He is a God uncredentialed in the empire, unknown in the courts, unwelcome in the temple. And his history begins in his attentiveness to the cries of the marginal ones. He, unlike his royal regents, is one whose person is presented as passion and pathos, the power to care, the capacity to weep, the energy to grieve and then to rejoice. The prophets after Moses know that his caring, weeping, grieving, and rejoicing will not be outflanked by royal hardware or royal immunity because this one is indeed God. And kings must face that.

...The royal consciousness with its program of achievable satiation has redefined our notions of humanness, and it has done that to all of us.<sup>24</sup> It has created a subjective consciousness concerned only with self-satisfaction. It has denied the legitimacy of tradition that requires us to remember, of authority that expects us to answer, and of community that calls us to care. It has so enthroned the present that a promised future, delayed but certain, is unthinkable (2001:36-37).<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup>This is a major theme found in the early work of Habermas, which we will look at below. Habermas calls it the 'colonisation of the life world'.

<sup>25</sup>In his book *Creative Word* Brueggemann divides the genre of the Hebrew scriptures into four primary categories. The first three are: (1) consensus-oriented, brute-fact, given knowledge he calls *ethos* speech—biblically typified by the Torah; (2) uncredentialed, disruptive, prophetically-new knowledge which he labels *pathos* speech—typified by the prophets; and (3) ordering, discerning, wisdom-seeking, tentative knowledge which Brueggemann designates *logos* speech—typified by the wisdom writings. Brueggemann sums up these 3 types of knowledge thusly: (1) knowledge as disclosure, (2) knowledge as disruption, and (3) knowledge as discernment (1982:91-92). He claims that all three contain a call to obedience: a receiving of disclosure, a participation in disruption, and a practice of discernment. 'As one moves from *receiving* to *participation* to *practice*..., the learner becomes more active and takes more initiative' (1982:109, emphasis in the original). The prophetic, of course, serves to disrupt in order that discerning practice might be initiated for everyone in the community—this is just what we will see to be the function of Habermas's *emancipatory* knowledge interest type in the process of seeking conditions approximating what he refers to as an 'ideal speech situation'. See page 173ff below.

Returning to Brueggemann, he reminds us that the above does not exhaust the nature of the Hebrew canon; one is still left with the Psalter. The Psalter is response dialogue from the learner—knowledge born out of proxemic obedience to the 'Thou'—born of trust—bursting forth in doxology. As Brueggemann points out, '...it is the kind of speech possible between two parties who  
(continued...)

However, it seems that for our Middle Region folk in Karang Resik, royal consciousness may not have been nearly as effective as we think—we have simply been led to believe it has. Perhaps the poor, the marginal, the disenfranchised *are* often thinking of such a radically altered future—but they do so couched in religious terms and with religious language prophetic in nature, buried beneath the surface of most public conversations.<sup>26</sup>

What is more interesting for our purposes is the affinity apparent between PRA themes and our characteristics of incarnational participation. From the earliest of days of PRA experimentation through today, Chambers has fervently emphasised at least five of our six marks of incarnational involvement. One can see it in his call for:

- a) 'primacy of the personal' and personal involvement as opposed to mere 'development tourism' (thus emphasising residential nearness and proximity);
- b) a focus on reversals from 'verbal to visual' and recording techniques utilising the ground, rocks and local materials and a local earthiness to the entire process (thus emphasising physical encounter and tangibility);
- c) triangulation which embeds both outsider and insider in a pluralistically-fashioned team so as to work from and through

---

<sup>25</sup>(...continued)

are on terms clear enough and sound enough to risk and to offer candor. That is, it is covenantal speech that understands the exchange to be one between centers of power' (1982:93).

This description seems akin to Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons' concept and it is also reminiscent of Polanyi and his realisation that all knowledge is personal and fideistic. Furthermore, it accords very nicely with the way in which we heard Scott describe *mētis* knowledge above (see note 12). Finally, it fits well with the linguistic turn so prevalent in much of social science and epistemology these days (something which will be apparent as we review Habermas's thought below).

As a side note, it should be noted that much of Jürgen Moltmann's work pioneered the theological linkage between the notion of *hope* and prophetic consciousness and action.

<sup>26</sup>In this regard, it is interesting to note Mark Woodward's comments in note 22 above on the Indonesian coupling of the religious and the politically prophetic.



different perspectives (thus emphasising social embedment and accountability);

- d) a slow and relaxed pace to the process (thus emphasising flexible availability and accessibility); and
- e) a reversal of perspectives and positions of power, from extracting to empowering, especially on the part of the outside professional (thus verifiable emptiness and authenticity).

The characteristic missing, of course, is that of narrative enactment. This seems to be a weak point for PRA. Chambers claims that there is 'potential for gaining rapport early and well, and early enough for the honest and accurate sharing of detailed knowledge and values' (1994b:1256). He seems to realise that this might give some pause, for he goes on to admit that

...for anyone who has endured and struggled through months of residence and participant-observation to achieve rapport and insight, learning a new language and living a new life, it could seem unlikely and even unwelcome, that other outsiders should find ways to establish rapport and gain good insights more quickly and with pleasure, participation and fun.

Empirically, though, the finding again and again with PRA has been that if the initial behavior and attitudes of outsiders are relaxed and right, and if the process can start, the methods of PRA themselves foster further rapport. Early actions by outsiders can include transparent honesty about who they are and what they are doing; and participation in local activities. Personal demeanor counts, showing humility, respect, patience, and interest in what people have to say and show; wandering around and not rushing; and paying attention, listening, watching and not interrupting. Then local people quickly lose themselves in activities such as participatory mapping and modeling and matrix scoring (1994b:1256).

But, questions still arise.

Firstly, we could ask, 'which local people?' Once again, communities are never homogenous gardens of melodious relationships, but the only way one can determine the sort of relational cleavages within them is to spend a good deal of time as a resident there. This directly relates to Chambers's comments about rapport. If

by this he means merely an affable ability to get along with local persons, to tell and laugh at jokes and to 'get on with the process', no doubt this might be achieved quickly. But, if truly troublesome community fissures are normally closely guarded by local villagers—as we ironically heard Chambers himself admit in his description of the brief rural visit above<sup>27</sup>—then we will need to log a good deal of time there in order to steep ourselves in their midst, so as to get to the heart of things not at first apparent.<sup>28</sup> This is the essence of our first mark of incarnational involvement, narrative enactment—a life unfolded narratively in a particular community so that residents know who we are *really*, and so that we get to know them as well. As I stated above, they must know our names, our stories and our lives '...if we truly wish to initiate anything close to participation in our development practice'. This will take time.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup>This is bolstered by Scott's 'hidden transcripts' thesis already referred to: '...How can we estimate the impact of power relations on action when the exercise of power is nearly constant? We can only begin to measure the influence of a teacher's presence on a classroom of students once he or she leaves the room—or when they leave the room at recess. Aside from what they say, the typical explosion of chatter and physical exuberance released when school is out, compared with their previous behavior in the classroom, does tell us something retrospectively about the effect of the school and teacher on behavior. The motives behind acts of deference will remain opaque to us until and unless the power that prompts it weakens or else we can speak confidentially, backstage to those whose motives we wish to understand.

'It is particularly in this latter realm of relative discursive freedom, outside the earshot of powerholders, where the hidden transcript is to be sought. The disparity between what we find here and what is said in the presence of power is a rough measure of what has been suppressed from power-laden political communication. The hidden transcript is, for this reason, the privileged site for nonhegemonic, contrapuntal, dissident, subversive discourse' (1990:25; cf. Scott 1985).

<sup>28</sup>Clifford has this to say about the anthropological ethnographer: 'In Dilthey's influential view, understanding others arises initially from the sheer fact of coexistence in a shared world. But this experiential world, an intersubjective ground for objective forms of knowledge, is precisely what is missing or problematic for an ethnographer entering an alien culture. Thus during the early months in the field (and indeed throughout the research) what is going on is language-learning in the broadest sense. Dilthey's "common sphere" must be established and re-established, building up a shared experiential world in relation to which all "facts," "texts," "events," and their interpretations will be constructed' (1983:128).

<sup>29</sup>Malcolm Crick, quoting an anthropologist colleague, observes '...that when one has been among an alien people for about two years one may think that one understands, but when one has been  
(continued...)



Secondly, we had best not confuse rapport with trust and an ability to confide at intimate levels. Local persons—who once again have been subject to a barrage of words and a plethora of short-term visits—generally watch what outsiders do; they have learnt not to simply believe what is said. Thus, our words, our statements and our concepts need to become flesh and dwell amongst them. This sort of result only comes with time—with life-to-life sharing played out over a long enough time that commonality is established. It is here that narrative enactment interfaces and validates the last mark of incarnational involvement, namely, verifiable emptiness.

As Alinsky puts it (in reference to identifying local leadership):

The job of locating the individual native leaders...can be done only through a search that requires infinite patience. It means participating in countless informal situations and being constantly alert to every word or gesture which both identifies and appraises the role of certain individuals within the community. It means the closest of observation and constant testing of each clue. The most fruitful setting for the discovery of local leadership is often barroom conversations, poker games, and all other unceremonious get-togethers where the spirit of informality prevails over suspicion and reticence. It means intimate association with particular interest groups within the community—religious, business, social, labor fraternal, and all others. It means working through these interest groups to discover the real leaders. In many cases these leaders will not be officially elected officers, but rather the powers behind the scenes (1989:72).

Local village residents are fully aware that anyone can come for a week, even for a month. But, once one pitches his or her tent amongst them and becomes at some level a local stakeholder, only then do robust relationships begin to be fashioned. It is this that is surely lacking in the PRA approach. An incarnational approach not only provides it, it requires it.

---

<sup>29</sup>(...continued)

there for ten then one is conscious of only beginning to learn' (1982:19).

This leaves me wondering: what is it that the PRA motivator thinks he or she understands—but indeed does not—after being there for only two weeks?

We now to turn to the next discipline of participation, the anthropological one. We will see that, while it evinces its own assortment of weaknesses and deficiencies, it helpfully offers corrective at one of the points PRA is most lacking. For sustained fieldwork has long been a feature of the anthropological model, a component which would help PRA approaches a great deal.

*An Examination of the Notion of Incarnational Participation  
in Relation to Anthropology—the Methods of Clifford Geertz*

...[The] strength [of good ethnography] lies in fully acknowledging the ‘battlefields’ of knowledge and power wherein a multiplicity of actors engage in struggles over the meanings and practicalities of livelihoods, values and organising processes. It thus implies detailed and systematic treatment of how the life-worlds of the researcher and other social actors intersect in the production of specific ethnographies and types of interpretation (Arce and Long 2000:8)

The field of anthropology—long enamoured with the notion of participatory involvement—primarily has to do with the study of the customs, traditions, civilisation and achievements of different peoples in different places; in short, it is concerned with the notion of culture.<sup>30</sup> As we will soon emphasise, the principal participation component which has historically distinguished this field of study from many others is the practice of participant observation and its accompanying procedure, ethnography. While the former is relatively self-explanatory,<sup>31</sup> Marcus and Fischer assist us in gaining a clearer idea of the goals and rationale for the latter.

---

<sup>30</sup>A concept which, since it is accompanied by almost as many definitions as commentators, can die the death of a thousand qualifications. Cf. Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s work *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (1952) which, alone, presents over one hundred definitions of the term.

<sup>31</sup>“Participant-observation” serves as shorthand for a continuous tacking between the “inside” and “outside” of events: on the one hand grasping the sense of specific occurrences and gestures empathetically, on the other stepping back to situate these meanings in wider contexts’ (Clifford 1983:127). For analyses into the mechanics of the process of participant observation, see Crane and Angrosino (1984:64-75); Seymour-Smith (1986:215-216) and Spradley (1980).



Ethnography is a research process in which the anthropologist closely observes, records, and engages in the daily life of another culture—an experience labeled as the fieldwork method—and then writes accounts of this culture, emphasizing descriptive detail. These accounts are the primary form in which fieldwork procedures, the other culture, and the ethnographer's personal and theoretical reflections are accessible to professionals and other readerships (1986:18).

For two primary reasons, I have chosen American anthropologist Clifford Geertz as our portal into anthropology's view of participation. Firstly, he spent close to two decades focussing his research on my current country of residence, Indonesia. Secondly, he is notable in that he nearly single-handedly inaugurated a new sub-division of anthropology designated symbolic or interpretive anthropology. This way of thinking lays great stress upon communication of purpose and symbolic meaning (Seymour-Smith 1986:273) and shares much in common with the project in the field of cybernetics known as semiotics, 'the science of signs and sign-using behaviour' (1986:255). Thus, treating culture as a text-analogue has figured greatly in Geertz's thinking—a posture which has not gone uncritiqued, as we shall soon see. In fact, generally the critique has centred, in some way, on his anthropological approach *vis-a-vis* the notion of participation. Thus, we should get insight into the importance of participatory approaches in anthropology by listening in on how Geertz has come under fire.

A distinctive component which has developed in the thinking of Geertz has been his frequent calls for a literary framing of anthropology as a field of study.

Believing, with Max Weber, that man [*sic*] is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (Geertz 1973:5).

And since there are many who now have joined his programme,

..the casting of social theory in terms more familiar to gamesters and aestheticians than to plumbers and engineers is clearly well under way. The recourse to the humanities for explanatory analogies in the social sciences is at once evidence of the destabilization of genres and of the rise of the 'interpretive turn,' and their most visible outcome is a revised style of discourse in social studies. The instruments of reasoning are changing and society is less and less represented as an elaborate machine or a quasi-organism and more as a serious game, a sidewalk drama, or a behavioral text (1983:22-23).

As a natural outworking of the above, Geertz readily looks to philosopher Paul Ricoeur for insight into the ethnographic task. He cites Ricoeur's concept of 'inscription,' a fixation of meaning in 'some established recording process' which gives opportunity for the interpretive enterprise. Hence, doing ethnography assists the anthropologist to train his or her eye upon the symbols in question—it functions as 'the key to the transition from text to text analogue, from writing as discourse to action as discourse...' (1983:31). Ethnographic activity serves as the inscription of social discourse—the fixation of meaning allowing for interpretation (1973:19).

The great virtue of the extension of the notion of text beyond things written on paper or carved into stone is that it trains attention on precisely this phenomenon: on how the inscription of action is brought about, what its vehicles are and how they work, and on what the fixation of meaning from the flow of events—history from what happened, thought from thinking, culture from behavior—implies for sociological interpretation. To see social institutions, social changes as in some sense 'readable' is to alter our whole sense of what such interpretation is and shift it toward modes of thought rather more familiar to the translator, the exegete, or the iconographer than to the test giver, the factor analyst, or the pollster (1983:31).

The impetus for Geertz's approach was due in large part to a crisis in the field of anthropology. As the discipline developed and matured, it became apparent—sometimes embarrassingly so—that anthropological field work could not be done entirely in the quasi-anonymous third person. The ethnographer was



unavoidably a constituent ingredient in all that transpired during ‘the fieldwork’.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, due in large part to Geertz’s prompting, a shift was effected from attempting to get inside of the heads of cultural actors to seeking to interpret–‘read’–the meaning of their verifiable acts, exchanges, words and interactions. A dialogical tacking back and forth between an internal, participatory engagement and an external, analytical remove—a sequence fashioned after Ricoeur’s ‘hermeneutical arc’ (Rodgers and McGinn 1985:738)—was the preferred method, what Geertz designates *experience-near* and *experience-distant* concepts:

To grasp concepts that, for another people are experience-near, and to do so well enough to place them in illuminating connection with experience-distant concepts theorists have fashioned to capture the general features of social life, is clearly a task at least as delicate, if a bit less magical, as putting oneself into someone else’s skin. The trick is not to get yourself into some inner correspondence of spirit with your informants. Preferring, like the rest of us, to call their souls their own, they are not going to be altogether keen about such an effort anyhow. The trick is to figure out what the devil they think they are up to.

In one sense, of course, no one knows this better than they do themselves; hence the passion to swim in the stream of their experience, and the illusion afterward that one somehow has. But in

---

<sup>32</sup>In the third chapter of his book *Local Knowledge* (in a chapter entitled “‘From the Native’s Point of View’: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding”), Geertz himself points to one of the specific causes of the crisis. It seems there was a loss of disciplinary innocence with the posthumous publication of Bronislaw Malinowski’s diary. Malinowski—along with Margaret Mead—probably did more than anyone else to establish the practice of participant observation and ethnography as exercises *de rigueur* for the discipline (cf. Clifford 1983:122ff). Geertz claims that, with the publication of the diary, ‘...the myth of the chameleon fieldworker, perfectly self-tuned to his exotic surroundings, a walking miracle of empathy, tact, patience, and cosmopolitanism, was demolished by the man who had perhaps done most to create it’ (1983:56; cf. Marcus and Fischer 1986:34). In essence, through the famous anthropologist’s private confessions, it became clear that he was not ‘...an unmitigated nice guy. He had rude things to say about the natives he was living with, and rude words to say it in. He spent a great deal of his time wishing he were elsewhere. And he projected an image of a man about as little complaisant as the world has seen’ (1983:56). Another cause of the crisis adding insult to injury—not mentioned by Geertz since it followed his work we are citing here—was Derek Freeman’s book (1983) which strongly contested Mead’s celebrated conclusions concerning Samoan adolescent sexuality (Aunger 1995:97). This further threw the image of the ‘impartial ethnographer as trustworthy reporter’ into disfavour. In short, it could no longer be ignored that the participant observer was a part of the equation, an individual with opinions (which were challengeable) and prejudices (which were intrusive). Thus was the concept of *reflexivity* thrust to centre stage.



another sense, that simple truism is simply not true. People use experience-near concepts spontaneously, un-self-consciously, as it were colloquially; they do not, except fleetingly and on occasion, recognize that there are any 'concepts' involved at all. That is what experience-near means—that ideas and the realities they inform are naturally and indissolubly bound up together. What else could you call a hippopotamus? Of course the gods are powerful, why else would we fear them? The ethnographer does not, and, in my opinion, largely cannot, perceive what his informants perceive. What he perceives, and that uncertainly enough, is what they perceive 'with'—or 'by means of,' or 'through'...or whatever the word should be. In the country of the blind, who are not as unobservant as they look, the one-eyed is not king, he is spectator (1983:57-58).<sup>33</sup>

The participatory nature of that recommended in this last point is obvious.

*Observation* as the controlling metaphor in the anthropologist's participatory involvement is now replaced with dialogue, '...a two-way and two-dimensional exchange... (Marcus and Fischer 1986:30).

However, the actual practice on display has been challenged. The core of this challenge has centred on the posture Geertz takes as mediator of the cultural evidence he interprets. Justified by Geertz's premise that '...anthropologists don't study villages...; they study *in* villages' (Geertz 1973:22), the reader is left with a paucity of evidence for conclusions proffered; very few informants are quoted, scant offerings of anything resembling raw data are offered. As Spencer says, 'from the mid-1960s onward, there is less and less space allowed for readers to agree or disagree or make their own connexions' (1989:147). Thus, we are left hoping that

---

<sup>33</sup>Reference to experience-near and experience-distant concepts is quite similar to another distinction commonly made in anthropological circles, namely that between 'emic' and 'etic' perspectives. Both terms were put forward by linguist Kenneth Pike, finding derivation in the linguistic categories 'phonemic' and 'phonetic'. An *emic* perspective aligns roughly with an experience-near concept whereas an *etic* perspective echoes much in the experience-distant image. As Seymour-Smith points out, an *emic* view refers to a perspective stressing subjective meanings shared by a specific social group and their culturally unique model of experience, whereas an *etic* view refers to a perspective stressing the development and application of models derived from theoretical and formal categories outside of a specific social group and their culturally unique model of experience (1986:92).



Geertz's clearly impressive and enjoyable rhetorical style does, at some level, accurately reflect life in the village. Presumably, all of this is due to Geertz's view that all evidence is unavoidably interpreted evidence. This being so, the anthropologist as ethnographer is encouraged to interpret and interpret boldly, all the while denying '...his readers the opportunity to assess for themselves the material from which he has constructed his accounts' (Spencer :147). Thus, what was envisioned as a dialogue ends up as a reporting event, with Geertz pressing his 'text analogue' concept to its wooden conclusion: '...he has tended to conceive of the interpreter as being a certain distance from the object of interpretation, as a reader might engage a text, rather than in terms of a metaphor of dialogue, which more literally suggests the actual situation of anthropological interpretation in fieldwork' (Marcus and Fischer 1986:29).

So, how might we gauge this participatory involvement in relation to our six incarnational marks? In light of Geertz's choice of literary exegesis as analogical prototype for doing anthropology, it seems that the narrative enactment component is sufficiently accommodated. As is customary in anthropological circles, on-going, sustained involvement on the part of the ethnographer is still seen as a part of getting on with the task at hand. Likewise, seeing as how he still advocates the tested procedure of participant observation and ethnography in the midst of the people studied, the picture of field work Geertz promotes is satisfactory in relation to the mark of residential nearness. Finally, a read of Geertz's 'Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight' (1973:412-453)—with its depiction of Geertz running through a Balinese kampung full of uncertainty and fear—should convince anyone of his

remarkable flexibility and willingness to tangibly divest. Thus, some of our marks are granted by way of Geertz's approach.

However, since Geertz gives us neither contestable questions, responses, interactions nor (admittedly translated) quotations concerning actual day-to-day experience over the course of his fieldwork, his approach, as Spencer puts it, '...sounds subjective on the one hand...[yet serves as] a final arbiter of ethnographic success' on the other (1989:146). In short, it is virtually impossible to judge his participatory integrity in light of *Physical Encountering* or *Social Embedment*.

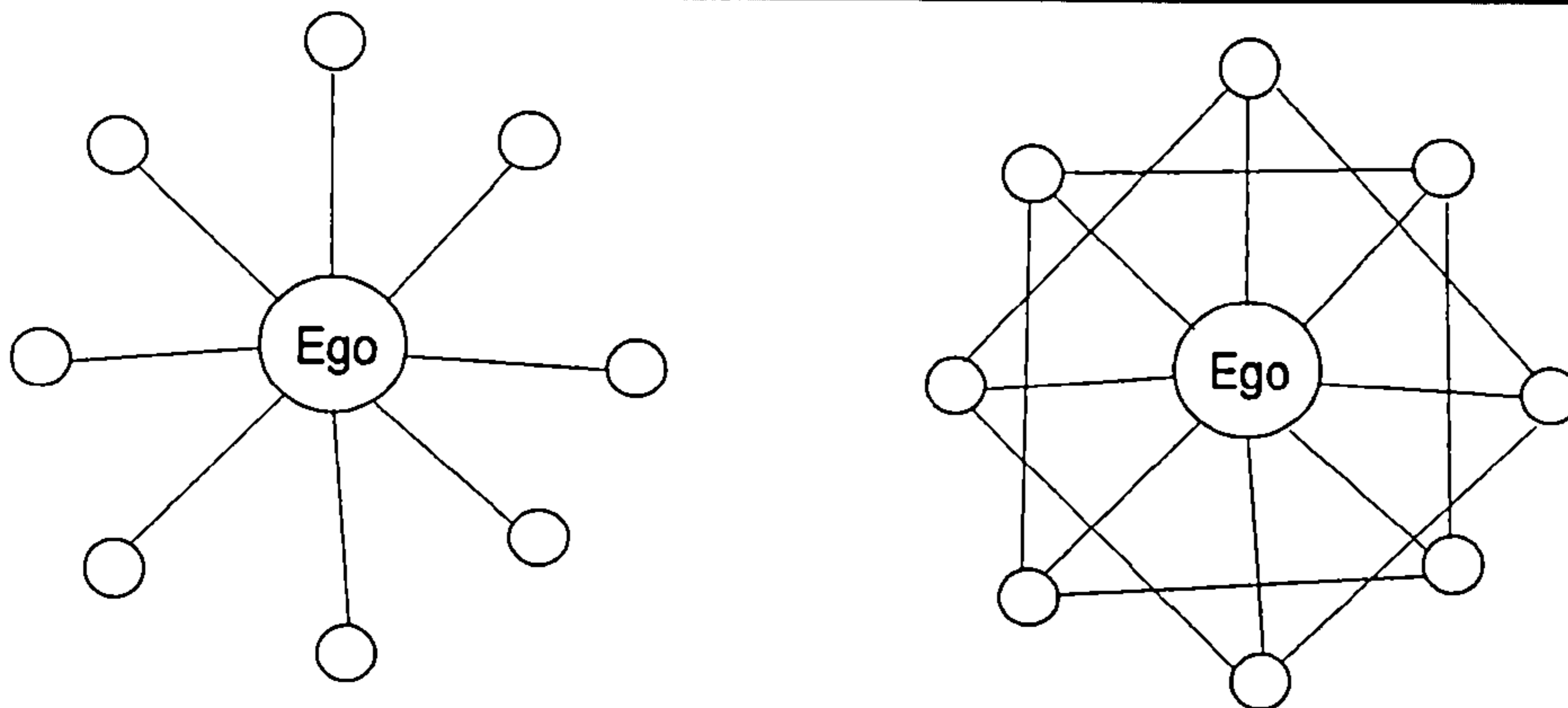
Much of the problem hangs on the manner in which Geertz, borrowing from Ricouer, treats 'meaningful action' as text analog (cf. Ricouer 1971). The pressing of Ricouer's analogy into service is sound since, if done properly, one *does* have recourse to actual events and statements. 'It is always possible' says Ricouer, 'to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, arbitrate between them, and to seek for an agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our reach' (cited in Spencer 1989:149). There can be public arguments over concrete data since the actions and occurrences in question, similar to texts, consist of 'a limited field of possible constructions' and they are available to all. 'These possibilities are greatly reduced with Geertz's work because he insists on filling the dual role of author-producer of the text...-and interpreter' (1989:149). Thus, to adapt Ricouer's analogy to conform to Geertz's practice, it is as if we are permitted only an author's précis of a text in order to adjudicate the meaning of the text itself! This is a classic example of 'the fallacy of misplaced concreteness'-with Geertz's abstracted prose rhetoric replacing concrete cultural events themselves. Thus, very



little Physical Encountering on the part of the reader of the ethnography takes place, resulting in a significant reduction in tangibility.

Similarly, Geertz's approach does not fare well when measured against the mark of Social Embedment. References to this quality are not new to the field of anthropology. Particularly helpful for this point is a distinction put forward by anthropologist Max Gluckman, that between simplex and multiplex relationships (1967:19ff.)<sup>34</sup>

All cultures have a wide variety of statuses—culturally-acknowledged positions or social stations conceptually plausible to persons in the local community. These statuses are configured very differently in tradition-based societies than they are in more industrialised ones centred on instrumental, commercial exchange and atomised interaction. The schematic below should help to explain this.



---

Simplex and Multiplex Relationships

As an example, in industrialised societies an individual can fulfill the occupational status of 'postman' for years in a given neighbourhood without ever

---

<sup>34</sup>Scott (1972:95) seems to mistakenly attribute these classifications to Adrian Mayer—notwithstanding the fact Scott makes reference to one of Gluckman's works in this same article (though not the one I am presently mentioning) (see 1972:91, n. 1).

truly getting to know those he serves—each and every day showing up with the post, possibly exchanging niceties with local residents, moving on to the next letter box only to repeat the scene all over again. Patrons might know the man as ‘John the postman’ (if they know his name at all) but it is safe to say that practically no one will know him as ‘John the father’ or ‘John the church member’ or ‘John the child-abuser’ (to use an extreme case). John is not socially enmeshed in the social context and therefore he is confronted with low levels of social accountability there.

Moreover, in today’s atomised society it is probably also true that those in John’s local neighbourhood could be likewise unfamiliar with John as a postman, since they do not encounter him in this capacity. In fact, they may neither know him as a church member—if he attends far from his home—nor as a father—since, with air conditioning, central heating, computers and cable television, he so rarely ventures outside the walls of his house. Add to this the fact that John spends the bulk of his waking day semi-anonymously delivering post and one is left with a person who rarely mixes in his local neighbourhood at all anymore. John is a person related to others by way of a pastiche of semi-detached alliances.

In Gluckman’s terms, John—represented by the ‘ego’ designation in the schematics above—is related to his others by way of linkages deemed *simplex* in nature. The various persons symbolized by the circles orbiting the ‘ego’ position are often entirely unknown to each other (since they generally live their lives in different geographical locations). Their link is to John and John alone—with the configuration resembling a collection of singular spokes fastened to the hub of a wheel (John).

The state of affairs is altogether different in a multiplex context. As opposed to a hub-spokes configuration, that in evidence has more in common with a web or a



woven tapestry. Deeply embedded in the fabric of local society, virtually everyone knows everyone else; and, they know each other across a wide range of statuses (represented by the cross-linkages depicted in the multiplex figure). Communal and societal accountability plays a large part in the lives of participants in this type of context. Residents know each other and are known through a prism of different statuses and roles—not merely by way of one solitary, detached status in isolation.<sup>35</sup>

It is interesting that Geertz has said that he takes the analysis of ‘webs of significance’ to be a key to understanding human life, and that the task of the anthropologist is the analysis of these webs. However, in the way in which he presents his results it is hard to say just who has done the web spinning, local communities or Geertz himself. He states that ‘nothing has done more...to discredit cultural analysis than the construction of impeccable depictions of formal order in whose actual existence nobody can quite believe’ (cited in Spencer 1989:147). As Spencer says, this charge

...may not *necessarily* be true of [Geertz’s] ethnographic analyses but it is impossible to tell because he so often denies his readers the opportunity to assess for themselves the material from which he has constructed his accounts’ (1989:147).

Not only might Geertz be insufficiently embedded in the communities he has chosen to describe, but his style and approach serves to detach the reader as well—keeping us at a considerable remove by virtue of what can only be called second-order evidence.

---

<sup>35</sup>One should avoid demonising the simplex configuration or romanticising the multiplex. Gossip and oppressive traditional coercion are but two of the negative consequences which can arise from the latter.

The interpretive approach to anthropology—represented by Clifford Geertz—highly values participatory qualities as an integral part of its disciplinary design. And being focussed on the symbolic, it also has much in common with the incarnational model as presented here. For, as I said at the end of Chapter Two, to be human is to be ontologically symbolic, involved incarnationally in a given community and in the complexities of life there. This being so, an incarnational emphasis will always imply a concern for symbolic interpretation—a defining characteristic in Geertz’s approach. And certainly a concern with the symbolic and the interpretive must play a part in participative undertakings in tradition-based communities like Karang Resik—steeped as they are in the liturgical and performative factors of staging and dramatisation. In the land of the ‘Mandatory Decorum of Acara’, ignoring the semiotic and the metaphoric will not be a mere oversight, it will be a breach of etiquette.

*An Examination of the Notion of Incarnational Participation  
in Relation to Political Theory—the Philosophy of Jürgen Habermas*

That the strategic action of those who have decided to engage in struggle, and that means to take risks, can be interpreted hypothetically as a retrospection which is possible only in anticipation, but at the same time not compellingly justified on this level with the aid of a reflexive theory, has its good reason: the vindicating superiority of those who do the enlightening over those who are to be enlightened is theoretically unavoidable, but at the same time it is fictive and requires self-correction: in a process of enlightenment, there can only be participants (Habermas 1974:40)

As we saw above, a frequent accusation levelled against PRA concerns its lack of theoretical undergirding. In his quest to validate local knowledge, insight and acumen, one often gets the sense that Chambers deliberately eschews the manifestly academic, preferring to buttress his assertions with functional descriptions of PRA



efforts attempted in local communities.<sup>36</sup> This is unfortunate. In the past forty to fifty years there has been an amplitude of theoretical analysis centring on participatory epistemology and praxis, much of which could strengthen PRA's case and correct and augment its implementation.

In what follows I would like to take a brief look at the thought of one of the leading torch bearers of this movement, the German philosopher *cum* sociologist Jürgen Habermas. Due to the volume and breadth of his writing, it will not be possible to offer much more than a cursory overview of his thought, with a concentration on that most germane to our topic. Nevertheless, I believe we will find it to be most interesting.

Habermas is difficult to classify since he stands concurrently in the stream of so many traditions. As the best-known individual linked to what has been called the 'Frankfurt Critical School'—a collection of scholars boasting such members as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Eric Fromm, Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse (Forrester 1997:167)—it is natural that he should confess neo-Marxist affinities.<sup>37</sup> However, over the course of time he has refashioned the Marxist elements of his theory significantly, if not completely. He has also been greatly informed by classical philosophical discussion, albeit eclectically gathered.

---

<sup>36</sup>One could hardly accuse Chambers of lacking in documentation and bibliographical material—the ends of his articles are invariably replete with numerous references. Even so, rarely do philosophical works find their way into these; more often, references are to write-ups of practitioner involvements and case-studies analysed.

<sup>37</sup>Returning to potential linkages between PRA and Habermas's argument, it was noted earlier that PRA found a good bit of its early prompting by way of the writings of the Brazilian educator *cum* activist Paulo Freire (see note 9 above). At this stage it is interesting to note that a good bit of the theoretical impetus for Freire's work seems to have been inspired by one of the Critical School's early innovators: Erich Fromm. Note, for example, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1989) wherein he repeatedly cites Fromm's work.

Aristotelian, Kantian and Hegelian postulates wend their way liberally throughout his work. Furthermore, if he deems it helpful for his purposes, he is not shy to take on the theses of others deriving from widely divergent academic fields. Thus, he makes much of Freudian psychotherapy, Jean Piaget's work on childhood development, Charles Sanders Peirce's views on pragmatics, Noam Chomsky's positions on linguistics and Lawrence Kohlberg's theories of moral development.

The primary focus for Habermas has been a rescuing of the Enlightenment project. While this past century has seen an almost wholesale realisation amongst philosophers that positivist and foundationalist approaches to rationality have failed, Habermas has not been enamoured of much which has followed; i.e., a full-scale relativism born of thoroughgoing contextualism. He has remained convinced that approaches based upon rationality should be retained, albeit with intellectual funding from a variety of sources as opposed to ones exclusively centred on empirical experimentation, control and the scientific method. Thus, since the early sixties he has been on a philosophical and sociological pilgrimage attempting to hammer out a basis for these new sources of rationality.

Early in his career Habermas focussed on analysing the historical attenuation of what he called the 'public sphere'<sup>38</sup>—the '..realm of social life in which "public opinion" can be formed. Citizens meet as a part of the public sphere when they come together not as subjects of the state or as private economic actors concerned with matters of individual interest, but rather as a free and open public body to discuss matters of general interest' (Roderick 1986:42). However, according to

---

<sup>38</sup>This was initiated in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989) which, though written in the early sixties in German, was first published in English almost thirty years later.



Habermas, this sphere has been severely restricted by means of the global capitalist system which places its emphasis on instrumental reason and science *qua* technology and bureaucracy.<sup>39</sup> In order to elucidate this Habermas penned his book *Knowledge and Human Interests*, in which he describes three separate ‘knowledge interests’<sup>40</sup>—focal points directing cognition, learning and intellectual aspiration.<sup>41</sup> He claims that each of these three separate ‘interest domains’ possess their own sphere and sustain their own unique variety of rationality.

The first he entitles the empirical-analytic, cognitive interest centred on controlled observation (Roderick 1986:308). This variety is the rationality of experimentation where there is a strict sundering of subject from object focussing on technical control. While science and knowledge attainment are popularly envisioned in this way—seeing as how the vast majority of late-Enlightenment science has focussed its attention here—Habermas does not see such a variety as the ‘...only viewpoint from which reality may be disclosed’ (Roderick 1986:54). Thus, he highlights two additional domains, entitled historical-hermeneutic and emancipatory-cognitive interests. The former pertains to a quest for meaning and interpersonal involvement between actors based on interaction modelled after the interpretation of texts (as opposed to ‘...the verification of lawlike hypotheses’ [Roderick 1986:309]

---

<sup>39</sup>By combining Weberian and phenomenological perspectives in their analysis, Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner also highlight these two points—technological production and bureaucracy—as critical touchstones in understanding shifts in present-day modernist societies. See Berger *et al.* 1973.

<sup>40</sup>Dallmayr claims that the term ‘knowledge interests’—inspired by Marxist sources—is simply another way of speaking of experience or perception (1976:71).

<sup>41</sup>These are ‘...three categories of processes of inquiry for which a specific connection between logical-methodological rules and knowledge-constitutive interests can be demonstrated’ (Habermas 1972:308; cf. Roderick 1986:55ff.)

as in the empirical-analytic). Language serves as the primary tool here, with the actor learning to use 'the grammar of ordinary language' by being socialised into a language community (Roderick 1986:55). However, since sciences historically associated with the *empirical-analytic* variety have proved to be so successful in controlling and fashioning the world, they have often spilt over their borders causing persons to be systematically treated as objects of control and distortion, devoid of self-reflection. Consequently, Habermas claims that there is a need for a third cognitive interest, one which concerns itself with

...securing freedom from self-imposed constraints, hypostatized forces and conditions of distorted communication. Again, this interest is based in the human capacity to act rationally, to be self-determining and self-reflective. The process of self-formation of the human species is, at least potentially, a process in which history can be made with 'will and consciousness'. But it is apparent that history embodies unreason in the form of domination, repression and ideological constraints on thought and action. Thus, it is also apparent that human self-understanding is limited by systematically unacknowledged conditions. If the rational capacity of humans is to function truly, if their rational potential is to be fulfilled, a particular type of knowledge becomes necessary to overcome and abolish these constraining conditions (Roderick 1986:56).

Unlike the first two varieties, emancipatory interest does not actually have its own domain<sup>42</sup>—instead, it is derived from the empirical-analytic and the historical-hermeneutic domains and '...only arises through their distortions' (1986:57).<sup>43</sup> When persons are treated as objects and not as rational actors in the public square, there

---

<sup>42</sup>According to Habermas, the operative sphere for the *empirical-analytic* is the natural sciences while the *historical-hermeneutic* sphere is the social sciences.

<sup>43</sup>In the modern social world, communicative reason is forever under attack from instrumentalism. Areas of our daily lives such as childrearing and family health thus become increasingly rule governed and professionalized. Habermas describes this as a process of *colonisation*, whereby our communicative practices are systematically undermined by instrumental ways of thinking... (Blaug 1995:426). We will explore this 'colonisation' process a bit more below (page 175).



arises a need for emancipation from manipulation. It is here that Habermas cites Freudian psychoanalysis as an example of a science possessing systematic reflection and a critical focus.<sup>44</sup>

Much of Habermas's work since the publication of *Knowledge and Human Interests* can be seen as an effort to more sharply spell out many of these points. He has described the sorts of distortions typically arising from the dominance of advanced capitalism and bureaucratisation—or, if one prefers, by way of the ubiquitous power of money and technology. He labels the result the 'colonisation of the lifeworld'—in which everyday spheres of practical rationality become dominated by oppressive forms of instrumental reason and a triumph of means over ends (when system components of global capitalism and bureaucracy invade and alter the lifeworld).<sup>45</sup> To address these issues Habermas has undergone a 'linguistic turn' in his thinking (a seeming natural outgrowth of his prior emphasis on historical-hermeneutic and emancipatory-cognitive interests), focussing on what he calls cases of 'systematic distortions of communication' (cf. Blaug 1999:7). Such a turn has culminated in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1984 and 1987), a complex thesis sourcing an extremely diverse number of theories and thinkers in order to demonstrate that the act of communication itself possesses inherent modes of rationality upon which the realisation of truth and justice can be based. Leaning heavily on speech-act theorists Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) and upon deep

---

<sup>44</sup>Habermas has stressed that he does not wish to take up Freudian theory in all of its details; instead, his aim is simply to underscore its emancipatory fibre.

<sup>45</sup>Blaug describes such colonisation as occurring when '...the instrumental and strategic methods by which the differential subsystems of the market economy and the administrative state are coordinated are seen to increasingly displace discursive practices within the lifeworld itself' (1999:28). He then adds that '...one of the uses for [Habermas's] theory then becomes aiding participants in their efforts to resist colonisation' (1999:28).

structure linguist Noam Chomsky (1957), Habermas has developed the 'universal pragmatics' thesis (Dallmayr 1976:77) which emphasises that—in his view—active participants make four 'universal validity claims' simply by putting forth public assertions (White 1979:1159). These consist of

...(1) the comprehensibility of the speech act; (2) the speakers' veracity; (3) the truth of the propositional component; and (4) the correctness or normative validity of the performative component. The comprehensibility claim is immediately tested and redeemed, to the degree that the speaker has produced a grammatically well-formed sentence. If a speaker satisfies this first claim he displays 'linguistic competence' in the sense in which Noam Chomsky has used the term....Habermas, though, thinks that this competence is insufficient to explain fully ordinary language understanding. He posits another universal competence: 'communicative competence,' which may be tentatively defined as the competence to raise and redeem the three other validity claims' (White 1979:1160; cf. Blaug 1999:7-8).

Such a process leads to a speech act in community open to rational validation, substantiation and testing.<sup>46</sup> Over time the speaker's integrity and sincerity can be examined (point 2), the truth of that proposed can be appraised (seeing as how others with differing opinions and different perspectives can sort out the truth for themselves and weigh in with their own possibly contrasting views) (point 3) and the real-life validity and applicability of the statement can be determined in practical life (point 4), all by virtue of communication attempted in a tangible community. In the end, '...each claim has a particular mode of redemption' (White 1979:1161).

Habermas maintains that a capacity for discourse is unavoidably implied in communicative action. These subjects interact on the basis

---

<sup>46</sup>In fact, for Habermas, the concept of *discourse* itself already assumes such acts of legitimising: 'In Habermas's definition, discourses are efforts to provide reasons or justifications for knowledge claims. While in everyday experiences cognitive assertions or intersubjective norms tend to be naively accepted or taken for granted, discursive exchanges involve a temporary suspension of belief in the interest of thorough investigation and interrogation. As he noted, discourses of this type are roughly comparable to the phenomenological procedure of bracketing, especially to the "reduction" of existence to potentiality' (Dallmayr 1976:72).



of a mutual recognition of the other individual and his validity claims; but the very possibility of this interaction rests on each subject's imputing accountability to the other. This supposition of accountability is what differentiates our attitude toward subjects capable of speech and action from our attitude toward objects (or subjects treated as objects) (1979:1162).

Habermas has always stressed the potentiality of domination and systemic distortion in all speech events. Thus, he readily admits that impartial validation of truth claims will only rarely be achieved without such accountability. In light of this realisation, he postulates an ideal type of speech event as the goal toward which all authentic discourse inherently takes its cue—even in the event it is not achieved. This ideal type he calls the counterfactual 'ideal speech situation', a goal '...anticipated in every act of actual argumentation' (Blaug 1999:11).<sup>47</sup>

Even though it is almost always counterfactual, all discourses 'anticipate' it and 'approximate' to it, in the sense that they contain the basic presupposition that, given sufficient time and freedom from domination, a rationally motivated agreement could be reached.

The ISS [ideal speech situation] is the extra-contextual fulcrum from which Habermas levers the critical power he requires to evaluate social practices. The validity-claims of speech, and the conditions under which they are legitimately questioned, transcend any local context. Their universal validity is counterfactual, and unsullied by particularity. It is perfect, like the face of the sun. Yet actual communication, and the criticism of social practices, entails the application of this counterfactual ideal to real contexts: the object of justified knowledge is situated not in the heavens but in the world. As we have seen, Habermas is quite clear that only actual participants can provide the content of discourses. The universal validity-claims of speech have to be raised here and now, and by actual participants in a practical discourse (1999:11-12).

What we have here is a system of procedural ethics (comprised of rules of participation) in contrast to normative ethics (comprised of specific content-oriented

---

<sup>47</sup>Why does discourse presuppose the ideal speech situation? It does so because to take part in a discourse is to suppose that a genuine agreement is possible. Discourse would be rendered a meaningless procedure if a grounded consensus were not possible or could not be distinguished from a false consensus. Discursive justification is thus a normative concept' (Davis 1978:93).

guidelines). In other words, rather than seeking normative definitions of justice and fairness (which can be used for totalitarian ends seeing as how they imply an adjudicating party of definitions; cf. Blaug 1999:30), procedures are put before discussants who, in the process of discourse and argumentation, are themselves capable of determining the content of justice and truth in their own given context. The point is to rid the setting of both internal as well as external domination and coercion, but not to do so at the expense of all universal rationality and truth claims. As discussion expands and takes on more participants it also accommodates an increasingly universal quality—consequently, Habermas’s thesis avoids the pitfall of contextualised ethics, i.e., an individual or communal relativism which guts all truth claims of their veracity and potential for arbitration.<sup>48</sup> Universality is found in the (supernal) dictates of the ‘ideal speech situation’.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup>Thomas McCarthy has illustrated the pertinence of Habermas’s thesis even in reference to tradition-based societies (cited in White 1979:1162-1163). By emphasising the paucity of alternative belief systems available to participants in Azande culture in the face of locally embraced shamanism, McCarthy explains that precisely in these sorts of closed-system cultural milieus, context rationality funding cultural relativism can easily go unchallenged in spite of the fact that it might be injurious to a good number of local actors (this is the very difficulty which Chambers seems not to recognise). While it is true that a respect for local beliefs and perspectives must always be evident, it is also true that such an approach—left to itself—has very little to offer in terms of argumentation against prevailing ideological components of dominance and silencing found locally. In contrast to this, ‘...Habermas’s approach through communicative action and discourse leaves intellectual access open to questions of ideology and universal standards for rationality’ (White 1979:1163). Seeing as how my own research has centred upon Indonesia, it is significant to note that several researchers from within the country have advocated a Habermasian approach to public democracy and social analysis; see, for instance, Muhammad A.S. Hakim (1996), F. Budi Hardiman (1993) and Frans Magnis-Suseno (1992).

<sup>49</sup>The ideal speech situation, as a normative counter-example to systematically distorted and instrumentalised communication, ‘...is neither prescriptively postulated nor derived from empirical observation and description; rather, embedded in the very core of communication, its tenets need to be carefully explicated and reconstructed. Given the prevalence of distorted or mangled communication patterns, to be sure, actual practice regularly falls short of the norm of ideal speech; yet, because of the consensual thrust, ordinary encounters always proceed on the implicit (though normally counterfactual) presumption that the norm is operative and observed. The distance between actual and projected patterns, in Habermas’s view, involves not so much a logical conflict as a practical challenge and political task: from this challenge “the critical theory of society takes its departure” (Dallmayr 1976:77).



The goal then becomes an actuation of discourse occasions approximating the ideal speech situation as nearly as possible. As Habermas puts it, this sort of a procedure

should contribute to the interpretation of conflicts which arise as a result of the over-legislation and bureaucratisation of areas of life, and it should do so with the intention of assisting those struggling to resist this development to clarify for themselves the conflicts in which they are involved (cited in Blaug 1999:29).

It is clear that Habermas has put together an impressively robust thesis. Its domain ranges far and wide, securing both historical and multi-disciplinary validation and thereby creating for itself space for richly multi-faceted application. What is more, the entire body of Habermas's thought seems to be shot through with a concern for participation on the part of community members—which is of particular relevance to our concerns. This being so, Habermas's thesis could serve to theoretically critique and buttress approaches like Chamber's PRA. The two theses possess similar concerns: for example, complaints on the part of PRA advocates that their methodologies and terminology have been coopted by bureaucratic establishments<sup>50</sup> finds corroboration in Habermas's 'colonisation' thesis—for, after all, what is this cooptation other than an over-fixation on means (e.g., PRA methods and tools) and a fetishisation of methods, all of which serve to displace practices of discourse with tools of instrumentality? Surely attempts at grass-roots participation practices such as PRA would be greatly enriched by giving increased attention to 'the colonisation of the lifeworld', 'systematic distortions of communication', 'the ideal speech situation' and to many of the other issues raised by critical theory.

---

<sup>50</sup>For example, see note 3 above.

But, as might be expected in the relation to one as well-known as Habermas, his positions have been subject to substantial critique. Space does not permit an analysis of these one-by-one<sup>51</sup>—instead, I will underscore only those most germane to our incarnational motif topic.

Firstly, Habermas has been judged as exceedingly esoteric and abstract. Many a commentator has observed that, for a person emphasising communication, Habermas is ironically very difficult to understand (cf. Forrester 1997:169, note 4). This could be due to the fact that his own dialogue has transpired largely within the confines of academic halls, out of reach of the fora of everyday participation and ordinary appraisers. Sadly enough, Habermas's inaccessible language and style has served to minimise the sphere of potential participation in his own theories and thought. This could be the reason one finds little reference to his contributions on the part of those in participatory development practice circles.

Secondly—and not unrelated to that above—criticism has been levelled at Habermas for endorsing notions of participation interfacing almost exclusively with the nation-state, a concept subject to much recent criticism. Bauman's words are representative here:

---

<sup>51</sup>Probably the weightiest and most noteworthy critique was raised by German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer over the course of an almost ten year publicly-published debate he had with Habermas (to his credit, Habermas has happily admitted that he gained the impetus for his 'linguistic turn' as found in his *Communicative Action* thesis by attending to Gadamer's thoughts; see Dallmayr 1976:76 and Blaug 1999:25). I for one remain unconvinced that Habermas satisfactorily answered all of the points raised by Gadamer, objections primarily centred on Habermas's assertion that critique must be levelled against tradition from outside the tradition itself in order to avert systematic oppression and a latent conservatism (Gadamer's counter was that this simply was not possible since *all* critique is inadvertently founded on some sort of hermeneutically-positioned tradition.) For insight into this debate, see How 1995 and Depew 1981. For a sympathetic but probing critique of Habermas's thought by a neo-Habermasian, see the work of his former pupil Seyla Benhabib, especially 1986 and 1992.



Since the idea that ‘society’ institutionalized in the state will lend a helping hand does not hold much water now, it is no wonder that eyes shift in a different direction. By an irony of history, however, they drift towards entities whose radical destruction were seen since the beginning of modernity as the condition *sine qua non* of ‘meaningful choice’. It is now the much-maligned ‘natural communities of origin’, *necessarily lesser than the nation-state*, once described by modernizing propaganda (not without reason) as parochial, backwater, prejudice-ridden, oppressive and stultifying, which are looked to hopefully as the trusty executors of that streamlining, derandomizing, meaning-saturating of human choices which the nation-state abominably failed to bring forth (1997:192, emphasis in the original).<sup>52</sup>

Thus Ricardo Blaug—toward the end of *Democracy Real and Ideal*—makes an appeal for ‘a changing of the object domain of application’ for critical theory (in fact, this is the title of his seventh chapter; see 1999:131ff.) What Blaug means is that, as opposed to concerning ourselves with intangible discussions of participatory discourse at the theorist’s level (as Habermas and others seem wont to do), we would do better by focussing on opportunities for democracy from the perspective of the local participant.

If deliberative theory is to be of real use, if it is to be a pragmatic and earthbound practice, it will need to address democracy not just as it appears in the elevated view of the political theorist, but also as it is actually encountered in the everyday world of ordinary people. Most of us do not practice statecraft. We do not face the problem of reforming an entire social order, or of ridding *all* discourses of exclusionary practices. We live firmly upon the earth, grubbing around in our work, our civic involvements, our religious affiliations, our familial and social groups and in our intermittent political activism. For the most part, it is in face-to-face discussions that ordinary people actually confront the problems of democracy. Here, more democracy mean greater fairness and participation *in the*

---

<sup>52</sup>Note these even more strident comments by Tom Nairn: “Nationalism” is the pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as “neurosis” in the individual, with much the same essential ambiguity attaching to it, a similar built-in capacity for descent into dementia, rooted in the dilemmas of helplessness thrust upon most of the world (the equivalent of infantilism for societies) and largely incurable’ (cited in Anderson 1991:5). I cite this simply to illustrate; it is most certainly overstated. See note 53 below for an appeal toward balance.



*decision-making process of an actual group.* All the work put in by the theorist to make democracy real by giving it an institutional location is a matter of little interest to us as participants in an actual discourse. This is because, in a real situation, the dimension 'where' simply does not arise. What we want is more democracy right here, right now. The democratization of society is certainly an intriguing thought, but as a meeting drags on, as it is once again taken over by the same people and the same interests prevail, such a notion seems very distant indeed (1999:134-135, emphasis in the original).<sup>53</sup>

While many of Habermas's central issues remain valid, it does seem that the situation has been theoretically reified and etherealised; the fallacy of misplaced concreteness seems to be surfacing yet again! It appears that, not only does PRA need Habermas, but Habermas needs PRA, seeing as how PRA's domain of service has from the beginning been aimed at what Bauman calls 'natural communities of origin'. For the local, incarnational practitioner, this is an encouraging realisation

---

<sup>53</sup>Blaug also comments that from the participant's point of view, democracy is not so much a phenomenon constructed in measures or gradually achieved, but is often something which happens to participants engaged in discourse; in a word, it is frequently something which erupts or 'breaks out', as Blaug puts it. 'Suddenly we find we have risen above the power-saturated ways in which we normally interact and that something quite different is taking place between us. From the perspective of the participant, democracy involves not a form for participation, but a breach of form' (1999:135-136).

This aligns with my reference to Scott's concept of a 'saturnalia of power' (see page 153 above) in which hidden, clandestine 'manuscripts' (discourses) long maintained sub-rosa by harassed peasant communities explode onto the public stage in revolt at times deemed politically expedient. As Scott says, these 'saturnalias of power' are often 'the first public declaration of the hidden transcript' (1990:202ff. ) This makes one wonder if the underground discourses occurring subterraneanly are not themselves the seeds of participatory discourse upon which democratic theories could base their efforts.

One must not fall into the trap, however, of pitting concerns with the nation-state against grassroots involvement—as if these were inherently at odds with each other. Attention *must* be given to both. In fact, couched historically and contextually, the concept of the nation-state in Habermas's thinking was by no means a thorough-going flight toward abstraction; instead, it was a very important piece in the process of the reconstitution of post-Third Reich Germany. The concern was to situate the citizen's legal standing in some sort of macro institution which could vouchsafe democratic rights for all persons everywhere—a necessity most acute at the time Habermas began writing. For an analysis of Germany's need at this level and the country's post-war undertaking of fixing the political process in law and law-giving institutions, see Stern 1984. For a look at Habermas's personal activities and engagement in Germany's public square, see Holub 1991.

In short, a tension between macro-institutional needs and micro-communal involvement must always be at the heart of any incarnational participatory approach. The critique of Habermas here is in relation to his almost exclusive concern with the nation-state. But, once again, such an obsession is understandable, in light of the context.



which invites a good bit of work, co-operation and dialogue. We have come to the place where practitioner and theorist must begin listening to each other.

Habermas has also been critiqued—especially by feminist theorists—in terms of suspect sources he has employed for inspiration. Specifically, it has been noted that he relies heavily on the works of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg as generative sources for his own theory, despite the fact Piaget and Kohlberg based almost the entirety of their work on male case studies—thus flirting with gender biases for all of their conclusions.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, there have been objections to Habermas's handling of the Enlightenment-inspired private/public bifurcation,<sup>55</sup> with a result being analyses of power differentials examined almost exclusively in terms of the male public or system domain. With this, power differentials in the lifeworld domain are left unscrutinised, generally at considerable expense to women there, who make up the bulk of the participants. Fiorenza explains:

Seyla Benhabib and other feminist theorists have noted that Habermas's categories of system and lifeworld and his thesis of the colonization of the lifeworld place the 'private/public' distinction in a dual location. On the one hand, the public belongs to the institutional system, and yet on the other hand, it also belongs to the lifeworld. The feminist challenge to Habermas points out that the private/public distinction needs to be analyzed with regard to both the relegation of women to the private sphere and the exploitation of women in the private sphere not only in terms of system (monetarization and bureaucratization), but also in terms of the oppressive prejudices of the lifeworld itself (1992:14).

---

<sup>54</sup>Note that much of Carol Gilligan's work has revolved round a challenge to male bias on the part of her former mentor Lawrence Kohlberg. See Gilligan's *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982).

<sup>55</sup>For a clear examination of the public/private bifurcation and its impact upon women in non-Western contexts, see Brydon and Chant 1989.

Biases like these pose significant methodological difficulties when extrapolated to theories of grand design like Habermas's.

Finally, we have heard Habermas's call for open discourse in order that comprehensibility, sincerity, truthfulness and the pertinence of the discussion taking place in the forum of discourse might be appraised—as has been previously noted, this is the very essence of his procedural ethics.<sup>56</sup> Thus it seems odd that, when faced with the place of theological discourse in the public square, Habermas pulls back on the basis that theological validity claims are categorically out-of-bounds, owing to their metaphysical nature. Ironically, it seems that Habermas himself has not shaken off the vestiges of a normative ethical approach, in spite of his repeated calls for discourse-based ethics as an alternative.<sup>57</sup> What we have here is an *a priori* judgement of the type Habermas has long been at pains to avoid in other spheres. As Tracy puts it:

Intellectually, Habermas's rigorous division of the modern intellectual world into three strictly autonomous spheres (scientific, ethical, and aesthetic) seems to ignore the validity claims of the religions in ways that even Kant, if not Weber, would have found puzzling.

One must surely insist, with Habermas, that the implicit or explicit validity claims of the religions demand, in modernity, the kind of critical reflection, dialogue, and argument on their claims that are accorded all other claims. But unless one assumes, rather than argues, that no religious or theological claims are argumentatively redeemable, a modern critical social theory should also account for and argue over just these claims (1992:35).

But, unredeemability of theological assertions is precisely what Habermas assumes. Due to what can only be seen as his own vulnerability to systematic

---

<sup>56</sup>With all four of these components decided in a specific community of deliberation; see page 176 above.

<sup>57</sup>For reference to this distinction, see page 177 above.



distortion of knowledge interests (prompted by a bias against religious rationality and egged on by an outmoded view of social evolution),<sup>58</sup> it appears that the philosopher himself needs to undergo an emancipation process in order that he may open up to more undistorted, participatory involvement on the part of a wider variety of discourse communicants—namely, those professing religious sensibilities.<sup>59</sup> As will be seen below, this includes Islamic scholars working toward democratic polity and participatory mechanisms, motivated primarily by their religious perspectives.<sup>60</sup> And, as we have already seen above, this better aligns with the profile of the vast majority of poor village residents found in non-Western contexts.

With this overview of Habermas's thought, we should now return to the marks of the incarnational motif. How do these accord with that just examined?

Habermas's position seems to accord well with all of our marks of incarnational involvement. For him, active involvement must be at the heart of anything put forward as authentic democratic practice: '...in a process of enlightenment', Habermas says, 'there can only be participants'. His theory emphasises first-hand involvement on the part of all local players and would-be participants—not merely an artifice of coopted, proxy participation on the part of

---

<sup>58</sup>Habermas seems to move this way due to an almost Comtean view of social evolution in which humanity is seen as having historically 'outgrown' a need for religious, transcendent perspectives. See Tracy for a critique of this aspect of Habermas's thought (1992:33-35).

<sup>59</sup>The fact that Habermas himself contributed a chapter to Browning and Fiorenza's book (1992)—and took part in the seminar which produced such—is a heartening sign.

<sup>60</sup>Cf. the following from Islamic social theorist Abdulaziz Sachedina: 'One of the burning questions for secularist thought is the relationship between religion and politics. The misgivings about the role of religion in the public sphere are based on the traditional conviction that religion and politics should not be mixed and that religion—especially potentially influential institutional religion—should be neutral on social and political issues. But neutrality in social-political matters means depriving religion of its ethical foundation, its essential concern with moral questions relating to poverty, injustice, and peace' (2001:9-10).

outside activists.<sup>61</sup> There is an attempt to spell out normative *performative* strictures for achieving this which, if made operational, could allow for narrative enactment, residential nearness, physical encountering, social embedment, flexible availability and verifiable divestment in the realisation of communicative action approaches. In fact, it is difficult to imagine how a participant's integrity and sincerity could be tested or how the real-life validity and applicability of opinions proffered in the speech situation could be judged (highlighting only two of the four universal validity claims) without tangible currency being given to our six marks. After all, a participant's integrity, his or her sincerity and the validity of words spoken and opinions put forward can only be appraised when they are concretely couched in tangible, real-life communities–settlements in which persons are carrying out an 'incarnated' existence.

But there is a lacuna at this point. It seems that Habermas's position has for the most part remained just that—a position. For a number of reasons, grounding the theory in everyday practice has proved difficult.<sup>62</sup> As noted above, Blaug (1999:131) has commented upon a fascination with the nation-state on the part of all democratic theory—not simply Habermas's—resulting in an '...increasingly macro-orientation to the normative basis of political and legal authority' (1999:155). A paucity of grassroots attempts, therefore, have been the result of such a focus. This should not surprise us. Most likely due in part to his extended career in German academia (the likes of which tends to reify, separate and compartmentalise), a flight

---

<sup>61</sup>It is at this particular juncture that PRA and PAR advocates could most learn from Habermas.

<sup>62</sup>Note Ruane and Todd's review of several *Critical Theory* works in order that they might identify ways in which critical theory might be applied in real-life contexts of practice (1988).



to abstraction seems to have taken place in terms of Habermas's writings and theorising.<sup>63</sup> Reframing the scope at least in part from the national to the local level could help to animate real instances of communicative action and authentic indigenous democratic participation of a Habermasian variety (a move recommended by Blaug as well; 1999:131-157).

A 'changing of the object domain of application' (as Blaug calls it) would result in very similar outcomes to those instances where participatory approaches incorporate the six marks of the incarnation. While theorising at the nation-state level is absolutely necessary, and while grand-design theorists such as Habermas do help us along, we must admit that there is always a tendency to overly abstract at this level—once again underscoring a need to 'recur to the concrete for inspiration' by focussing on local, concrete fora of democratic deliberation. This seems a weakness in Habermas's theorising. By availing ourselves of his position and linking it to village-oriented methodologies such as PRA, much can be accomplished. But this must be done concretely—the six marks of the incarnation can greatly assist in this effort.

---

<sup>63</sup>In the early portion of their book, Daly and Cobb (1994) comment on what they call 'disciplinolatry'—a by-product of university-based knowledge production and delineation along the lines of academic departments. They assert that this has been one of the primary causes of the wide-scale 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness' in the Western world. We should not be surprised if an academic the stature of Habermas evinces symptoms of 'disciplinolatry'—notwithstanding his polymath style and admitted multi-sectoral approach.

*An Examination of the Notion of Incarnational Participation  
in Relation to Indonesian Islamic Theory—the Democratic Polity  
of Abdurrahman Wahid*

If history proves anything, it has proved—and abundantly—one thing, which any future balancing of accounts must bear in mind. As Odo Marquard...put it in his own inimitable way: 'If—regarding a holy text—two interpreters, contradicting each other, assert: I am right, my understanding of the text is the truth, and a truth imperative for salvation—it may come to a fight.' But if they agree instead that 'the text can be understood in a different way and, if this is not enough, in another way, and yet another'—they may rather start to negotiate—'and who negotiates, does not kill'. The 'pluralizing hermeneutics', unlike the 'singularizing hermeneutics', augurs a 'being towards the text' in lieu of the 'being towards murder' (Bauman 1997:200).

Religion should reformulate its views of human dignity, human equality before laws, and solidarity among human beings. Through this endeavor, each religion can integrate to achieve basic universal values that in turn bring the interreligious relation to a new level. The new level is the phase of religious service towards society (regardless of their individual identity) in its most concrete form such as to solve the problem of poverty, to support the rule of law, and freedom of speech (Abdurrahman Wahid, as quoted in Mujiburrahman 1999:347).

Beginning with the publication of Clifford Geertz's *The Religion of Java* a taxonomy of sorts has held sway in the analysis of Indonesian Islam, especially as it is found on the island of Java. Geertz put forward the thesis that Javanese people employ a three-fold classification when speaking of their own personal religious identity: *abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi*. On his view, the term

*abangan*, representing a stress on the animistic aspects of the over-all Javanese syncretism[,]...broadly relate[s] to the peasant element in the population; *santri*, representing a stress on the Islamic aspects of the syncretism[,]...generally relate[s] to the trading element (and to certain elements in the peasantry as well); and *prijaji*, stressing the Hinduist aspects[,]...relate[s] to the bureaucratic element—these then



are the three main subtraditions... (1960:66, emphasis in the original).<sup>64</sup>

In relation to the two primarily Islamic strains, one often runs into a pitting of the urban, modernist Muslim (generally aligned with the *santri* class) against the rural, traditionalist Muslim (typically seen as the *abangan* grouping). However, in the last twenty to thirty years, much has been shifting—lines are not so neatly drawn and actors seem to straddle the fence. This is nowhere better personified than in the person of Abdurrahman Wahid, the individual whose thought we will survey below. First, however, it will be helpful to look at the makeup of Indonesia's Muslim community, especially in relation to its openness to ideas and innovation derived from outside the country.

It is analytically useful to divide the Islamic community in Indonesia into three primary categories: traditionalists, purists and neo-modernists.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup>Mark Woodward (1989) has cogently challenged Geertz's thesis in terms of the identity of Javanese Islam (claiming that this identity is *not* an historical Indonesian amalgamation of Hinduism, animism and Islam as Geertz had claimed but is instead of *sufistic*, mystical origin deriving from India) and in terms of the taxonomy Geertz made popular (Woodward claims that the *priyayi* class is not actually a distinct form of Islam but instead a socio-economic class marking or designation). Hefner (1987:533-534), amongst others, has also emphasized the same point. Nonetheless, the division between *abangan* and *santri* remains a helpful analytical tool, as we shall soon see (and as Hefner also acknowledges; see 1987:534-535). Incidentally, note that since Geertz published this work in 1960, his spelling of the term *priyayi*, i.e., *prijaji*, varies from the governmentally-sanctioned orthography which has been accepted since 1972 following the government's—in co-operation with the Malaysian government—programme of 'purification' (*penyempurnaan*) of the national language (which is essentially the same as that used in Malaysia).

<sup>65</sup>Uhlen (1997:63-83) divides what he calls 'Islamic Democracy Discourses' in Indonesia into four broad categories: traditional, modernist, neo-modernist and transformist. The first of these is essentially the same as what I am also calling traditionalist here; the modernist is a strongly Westernised strain (at times, Uhlin says, criticised as being too Western) which Uhlin illustrates by pointing to the Indonesian political scientist Amien Rais, the neo-modernist—which takes to be a middle ground between traditional and modern—he aligns with Indonesian Islamic theorist Nurcholish Madjid (see note 71 below), while the transformist he depicts as being more sociologically radical variant of Islam evincing neo-Marxist leanings. While there is merit in this taxonomy, I do not see the last variety as yet possessing a critical mass in Indonesia (perhaps due to a still-hovering spectre of anti-communism in Indonesian Islamic circles), nor do I see a significant difference between the thinking of Madjid and Rais in terms of openness to Western thought. Finally, this system of categorization does not seem to me to accurately place influential groups like *Persis* into any sort of a  
(continued...)

The first grouping—more rural and geographically dispersed in nature—is best represented by the rank and file of Nahdlatul Ulama (historically associated with Abdurrahman Wahid’s family, as we will see). These people are generally more resistant to change. It is not surprising, therefore, that this segment of the Islamic populace, throughout history, has generally occupied traditional patronage-steeped leadership positions corresponding to those described in Chapter Two.

Change—often pejoratively framed with suspicion as ‘innovation’ (*bid‘a*)—threatens customary leadership patterns and patronage structures of this type and the visions of truth they represent, thereby throwing all into disarray. Hence, traditionalists make much of *taqlid*—‘unquestioned obedience’ or ‘emulation’—as the binding form of instruction in order to encourage Islamic advancement. The call is for a maintenance of customs, an esteem of leadership and a guarding of traditional principles so as to remain faithful to the past, carrying it toward the future.<sup>66</sup>

In contrast to traditionalists, purists—represented by the previously-mentioned organisation Persis—are not only open to change, they ardently call for it. However, they too are distrustful of *bid‘a*, since they seek a pure, ‘golden age’ Islam uncontaminated and distilled. Consequently, that which they classify as ‘innovation’ ironically includes many of the traditions highly cherished by those in the NU camp—traditional Javanese and Sundanese practices carried out in rural regions for centuries. Purists call for a sweeping catharsis of Islam, both in relation to traditional

---

<sup>65</sup>(...continued)  
ranking. This explains my depiction here.

<sup>66</sup>These are the traditional Islamic religious teachers—*kyai* or *ajengan*—we heard Jessica Glicken describe in note 108 in Chapter Two. Glicken underscored there that a primary concern on the part of these local leaders is to receive sufficient *hormat* (respect) through ‘...increased subservience to the (immutable and unchallengeable) religious laws located in the Qur’an which regulate behavior in the *ummat* [community of Islamic believers].’



syncretistic elements as well as of encroaching Western factors, in order that there might be a return to an earlier, purer, more Arabic-flavoured faith.

Neo-modernists are a different breed altogether. Often heavily influenced by the writings of Pakistani Islamic scholar Fazlur Rahman (Feener 1999:118),<sup>67</sup> these individuals call for change based upon an open reception of ideas from outside the Islamic world, most especially by way of Western academic thinking and social sciences—although, they generally find support for this in traditional Islamic concepts, terms and principles. They commonly describe themselves as working toward a civil society, a nation characterised by democratic principles offering everyone an opportunity to engage in the process of nation-building. They see not only rigorous social analysis as absolutely necessary, but they also call for a re-evaluation of the role and nature of Islamic scripture, inclusive of a revitalisation of exegetical practices in order to grant these their faith authority in the public square. In short, they wish to throw open the gate of *ijtihād*<sup>68</sup> so as to allow for a broad interaction between Islamic thought and social practices. In fact, quite often an invitation is made to those from outside the Islamic fold to participate in the quest for meaning and purpose—since many neo-modernists feel that Islam can only be

---

<sup>67</sup>For a look at this scholar's thinking in this regard, see Rahman 1982.

<sup>68</sup>On *ijtihād*', see pages 64ff above.

reinvigorated by way of contact and interaction with Western thought.<sup>69</sup> Hefner labels these sorts of thinkers ‘Muslim Democrats.’

...Muslim democrats, like those in Indonesia, tend to be more *civil* democratic or Tocquevillian than they are (Atlantic) liberal in spirit. They deny the need for an Islamic state. But they insist that society involves more than autonomous individuals, and democracy more than markets and the state. Democracy requires a noncoercive culture that encourages citizens to respect the rights of others as well as to cherish their own. This public culture depends on mediating institutions in which citizens develop habits of free speech, participation, and toleration. In all this, they say, there is nothing undemocratic about Muslim voluntary associations (as well as those of other religions) playing a role in *public* life of civil society as well as in personal ethics (2000:13).

Abdurrahman Wahid’s thought lies squarely within the ranks of this third category—he is a ‘Muslim Democrat’.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup>Nurcholish Madjid (see note 71) has this to say in reference to the Islamic concept of *shūra* (‘consultation’—a concept we will examine in more detail below) and its relationship to the lack of free and open democratic deliberation in most Muslim societies: ‘Because of the absence of fresh ideas we have lost...“psychological striking force.” This is due to the fact that there is not a single free-thinking body which focuses its attention on the immediate needs of continuously developing social conditions, whether in the economic, political or social arenas. Be that as it may, we still have to admit that our Islamically based ideas can best solve those problems if they are adjusted, refreshed, renewed and organized (coordinated) in such a way that they are in step with the realities of the present age. For example, the [Islamic] [*sic*] teaching concerning *shura* or *mushawara* [consultation] [*sic*] has been generally accepted by the *umma* as almost if not exactly identical with the concept of democracy that originated in the West. But on the other hand, the principal teachings of Islam on social justice, and the care and protection of the weak, the poor and the oppressed, as contained in many passages of the Qur’an, has yet to find expression in ideas formulated for practical application in dynamic and progressive terms. This is so because the *umma*, it appears, still views with horror the word “socialism,” which like “democracy” originated in the West, and has a meaning which is quite similar to the corresponding Islamic concepts.

‘If this is not due to the absence of freedom of thought, then what psychological impediment is there within the *umma*? It has also made the *umma* incapable of taking initiatives in the development of this worldly society. Initiatives are always taken by others first, and as a result strategic positions that have to do with concepts and ideas fall into their hands. Islam is then excluded from those [strategic positions] [*sic*]’ (1998:287).

<sup>70</sup>Toward the conclusion of his discussion of ‘civil Islam’ in Indonesia, Hefner does a fine job of delineating the three categories we have laid out here—and the choices before each—when he says that ‘...traditions laying claim to ultimate meanings face a common dilemma: how to maintain a steadied worldview and social engagement while acknowledging the pluralism of the age.

‘One response to this predicament, a repressively organic one, is to strap on the body armor, ready one’s weapons, and launch a holy war for society as a whole.

‘...A second strategy for religious reformation renounces organic totalism for separatist

(continued...)



Abdurrahman Wahid was brought up in East Java—historically a Nahdlatul Ulama (hereafter NU) centre and thus known for its traditionally conservative variety of Islam. Nevertheless, Wahid has advocated not only a renewed role for Islamic thinking in public fora, but also a significant reevaluation of the nature of Islamic theorising in the process. He unashamedly preaches democratic principles and institutionalised participatory procedures for Indonesian political affairs and he is not embarrassed to embrace Western theories or thinking if he feels it serves his purposes. This being so, it is fitting for us to take a brief look at his thought here.<sup>71</sup>

As was touched upon in Chapter Two, from 1984 until his election as Indonesia's fourth president in 1999, Abdurrahman Wahid (or Gus Dur as he is often called)<sup>72</sup> served as the head of Indonesia's largest Islamic non-government

---

<sup>70</sup>(...continued)

sectarianism. Like the Essenes of ancient Israel under Roman rule, proponents of this option take refuge in the uncompromised purity of small circles of believers.

'...There is a third option for a refigured religion, a civil one. Rather than state conquest or separatist isolation, this approach accepts the diversity of public voices, acknowledging that this is, in some sense, the nature of modern things. What follows after this varies widely, but the underlying pluralist premise remains. The civil option may promote *public* religion, but distanced from the machinery of state. It strides proudly into the public arena but insists that its message is clearest when its bearers guard their independence. Religious voices must be ready to balance and critique the state and the market, rather than give both a greater measure of social power. Here is a religious reformation that works with, rather than against, the pluralizing realities of our age' (2000:219-220).

The first choice seems to be that preferred by the traditionalists, the second by the Purists (epitomised by *Persis* and their quest to purify and return to a pristine age), whereas the third describes the hope of neo-modernists like Abdurrahman Wahid and Nurcholish Madjid (for the latter, see note 71 below) .

<sup>71</sup>Another very insightful Indonesian Islamic democrat worthy of attention is Nurcholish Madjid—nicknamed *Cak Nur*. Madjid—who studied for a PhD at the University of Chicago under Islamic scholar Fazlur Rahman, mentioned above on page 191 (cf. Hefner 2000:118)—makes much of democratic principles as well, based upon a opening wide of the gate of *ijtihad*' leading to broad-based pluralism and an open and deliberative notion of *shūra* (for reference to *shūra*, see below on pages 198ff). See Nurcholish Madjid 1998; for a synopsis of his thought, see Feener 1999, Hefner 2000 and Riddell 2001.

<sup>72</sup>A comment is appropriate in relation to Wahid's nickname *Gus Dur*—especially since it seems so very different from his given name. The appellation *Gus* (pronounced something like 'goose') is used in more aristocratic Javanese homes in order to honour the older son of a person of status. *Dur* is simply an abbreviation of the man's full name, *AbDURrahman*. Thus, while calling

(continued...)

organisation, the traditionalist NU. In light of the history of this organisation, of Indonesia, and of Wahid's <sup>73</sup> family, the attainment of such a position is not at all surprising. His grandfather, Kyai Haji Hasyim Asy'ari was one of the primary founders of NU, while his father, A. Wahid Hasyim, later served for a time as the head of the organisation as well as as Indonesia's first Minister of Religious Affairs—until his tragic death in an automobile accident in 1953 (Mujiburrahman 1999:341; Riddell 2001:250).

This being so, however, it is also true that Gus Dur has been anything but a traditionalist. Born in 1940 and educated in both government schools as well as at local NU-influenced Islamic training institutions (Riddell 2001:250), in 1964 he sought to augment his education in Cairo by enrolling in the famous Al-Azhar University. However, he then proceeded to withdraw from that institution prematurely, enrolling at the University of Baghdad from which he later received a degree in Arabic literature. It seems that one of the primary reasons for his transfer from Cairo to Baghdad was due to his dissatisfaction with Al-Azhar's rote teaching and memorisation methods, this bearing witness to Wahid's quest early on for freedom to think on his own, thereby rejecting the *taqlid* style which generally held sway in his own NU.

---

<sup>72</sup>(...continued)

Abdurrahman Wahid *Gus Dur* is no longer strictly appropriate—seeing as how it carries a sense of referring to a young boy—for Wahid the designation has been widely adopted (even at the national level) and thus it no longer is taken as being out of place; cf. Mujiburrahman 1999. When he was president he was even at times inadvertently (and incorrectly) referred to as 'President Gus Dur'.

<sup>73</sup>Since most Indonesians adopt their father's given name to serve as what we would label a surname, it is actually not technically accurate to refer to Abdurrahman Wahid as 'Wahid'—since this more properly refers to his father, a person of Indonesian national prominence in his own right. However, since this practice is so very common in Western literature, even when referring to Indonesian personalities (inclusive of Abdurrahman Wahid), I will occasionally follow suit as a matter of convention and for the sake of consistency.



Gus Dur has been a champion of broad-based pluralism since he became head of NU in 1984. At that time, his first step was to withdraw the organisation from official politics (where it had been politically amalgamated by the government with other political parties and thus diluted and marginalised)—shrewdly negotiating space in the process for NU to engage more actively in village-level social involvement and cultural influence, out of the direct reach of the Soeharto government’s suffocating regulations aimed at curtailing the activities of bodies politic. Next, in league with NU intellectual Achmad Siddiq, Wahid encouraged NU to accept *pancasila* as its ‘sole foundation’ (*asas tunggal*) (see Ramage 1995:35-39 and Hefner 2000:160)—this being accomplished due to his ability to publicly synchronise Islamic theory with a broadly democratic interpretation of the national doctrine (a task made much easier since his own father was one of the conceptual architects of the *pancasila* doctrine in the mid-forties). In Ramage’s words, Wahid’s thoughts concerning *pancasila* ‘...[went] beyond ritual usage and [struck] at the core of Indonesian politics and society’ (1995:48).<sup>74</sup> Thus, his position of substance on the state doctrine gave him room to weave the democratic principles he saw within it into his open-minded view of the Islamic faith.

For the next fifteen years of Soeharto’s tenure Gus Dur rode the waves of political vicissitudes as NU’s chairman—occasionally being embraced by the administration, but more often suffering isolation and opposition at the hands of the New Order government. His greatest battle with Soeharto took place in the early 90s, when the president sought to coopt Islam for his own political purposes.

---

<sup>74</sup>Here we might recall note 61 in Chapter Two where we heard Gus Dur comment on the relationship of democracy and *pancasila*.

Soeharto's tool of choice was an organisation known as ICMI (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* or 'The Indonesian Muslim Intellectual's Association').<sup>75</sup> In Wahid's view, this group arose from partisan motivations and would only serve to damage both democracy and Islam at the same time (see Ramage 1995:62-65).

In a vocabulary not unlike that Soeharto might have used six years earlier to attack Islamist opponents of the *Pancasila*, Wahid denounced ICMI as a 'sectarian' organization that was 'reconfessionalizing' politics and society. Wahid's attacks on the association, and his none-too-subtle hints that Soeharto was betraying the hard-fought achievements of Indonesian pluralism, deeply angered the president, and Wahid would pay dearly for his criticism. Although in the mid-1980s Wahid had been among the Muslim leaders Soeharto courted, after his critical comments Wahid was deemed a Soeharto foe. Soeharto strategists launched secret campaigns to slander Wahid and remove him from the leadership of NU... (Hefner 2000:128).

Although Wahid denies it as a response, in March 1991 he banded together with forty-four other Indonesian intellectuals—persons from a variety of religious and cultural perspectives—in order to form an organisation known as the 'Democratic Forum' (*Forum Demokrasi*). As Hefner points out, Wahid seems to have done this in order to '...shore up his standing in the Muslim community and to assist the cause

---

<sup>75</sup>ICMI was led by then Minister of Technology BJ Habibie, who later became Soeharto's vice-president and thereafter succeeded him as president of the country for close to a year and a half—immediately prior to Gus Dur becoming president. For over thirty years Habibie nurtured an extremely close relationship with Soeharto, which means that his reign as president suffered greatly in terms of association with the former president. As the magazine *Newsweek* reported just after Soeharto's fall and Habibie's ascendancy to power,

'...Habibie...became Suharto's foster son at 13, after his own father died. He owes everything to Suharto's patronage. Habibie was minister of Research and Technology before Suharto promoted him to vice president [in March '98]. The Army has never liked him, and he has no political support, apart from a group of pro-Suharto Muslim leaders. He is widely ridiculed for his harebrained development schemes (he has spent \$2 billion on the needless production of an Indonesian jetliner.) (*Newsweek* 1998e:19).

Furthermore, '[the *ABRI* generals]...have no love for Habibie. As research-and-technology minister in the 1980s, he seized many of the top officers' most profitable businesses for his own state-run "strategic industries" group—for efficiency's sake, he said. The generals would convene the *MPR* [People's Consultative Assembly—the body which 'elects' the president every five years] as quickly as possible to replace Habibie with a permanent successor' (*Newsweek* 1998b:18).



of pluralist nationalism' (2000:162). And, as the leader of the largest non-government organisation in the country, he quickly became the Democratic Forum's spokesman (1995:162; see *The Jakarta Post* 1991). Such a move only served to aggravate his disagreements with the government, resulting in an increasingly tenuous position for Wahid. Yet, in spite of this, he outlasted Soeharto and, in the end, was elected the country's fourth president in 1999, after the fall of Soeharto the previous year.

That just described would have been impossible had it not been for Wahid's keen ability to think profoundly and democratically in relation to prospects for political engagement—an enterprise he undertook entirely as a Muslim, with positions based squarely upon recognised Islamic theorising. According to Mujiburrahman, Wahid's political thought and his bold positions on democratic pluralism were systematically inspired by his Islamic faith (1999:340).

The Islamic basis of Gus Dur's political thought can be explored in his conceptualization of Islamic universalism, cosmopolitanism and *pribumisasi Islam* (contextualization of Islam). These three concepts are the central ingredients of Gus Dur's political thought.

For Gus Dur, Islam has a universal value which is reflected in the Islamic belief in monotheism (*tawḥīd*), Islamic law (*fiqh*) and ethics (*akhlāq*), leading to a deep concern for human dignity. 'The principles of being equal before law, of protection of society from despotic powers, of the maintenance of the rights of the weak and of the limitation of the authority of political power, are reflections of Islamic concern with human dignity.'

One of these examples of how Islam pays serious attention to human dignity is manifest in the principle of Islamic law known as the protection of five basic human needs (*ḍarūriyyāt*), namely (1) the protection of self (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) from any violation; (2) the protection of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) from any enforced conversions; (3) the protection of family and next generation (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*); (4) the protection of personal property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*); and (5) the protection of profession or intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*).

The five basic needs of protection cannot be met, argues Gus Dur, if they are not supported by the cosmopolitan character of

Islamic civilization. In other words, the Islamic universal values cannot be realized on earth, and for humans, if they do not interact with and absorb other existing civilizations. Gus Dur maintains that history tells us that Muslims confidently embraced other civilizations and in so doing, absorbed varieties of cultural manifestations, thereby creatively forming a 'new' civilization.

On the premise that the nature of Islamic civilization is cosmopolitan, Gus Dur introduces his idea of *pribumisasi* or the contextualization of Islam. The idea of *pribumisasi* rests on the interdependence between religion and culture in our daily life. Religion and culture can be differentiated but cannot be separated because they overlap (1999:342).<sup>76</sup>

With this in mind, Wahid takes democratic principles to be broadly supported by and largely analogous to Islamic values (1999:346). He makes much of the Islamic concept of *shūra* (consultation) in this regard—claiming that a contextualization of Islam which serves to safeguard the five basic needs will always have at its centre a broad mechanism for consultative democracy and participation.

With reference to an Egyptian Islamic thinker, 'Ali 'Abd al-Rāziq, Gus Dur maintains that there are at least three Islamic values which are in line with democratic principles: *al-ḥurriyya* (freedom), *al-'adāla* (justice) and *shūra* (consultation). These three principles, when interconnected, form democracy. The *shūra* principle in particular, is founded upon other derivative principles, namely the openness of any political process, accountability of the ruler to citizens and the limitation of political authority. To assess the manifestation of democratic values in our social life we can employ the Islamic universals of the five basic needs of a human being...as a measure. In this regard, Gus Dur recalls one of the general principles of Islamic jurisprudence, that is, 'the government's policy over its citizens relies on the public interest' (*taṣarruf al-imām 'alā al-ra'iyya manūḥ bi'l-maṣlahā*) (1999:346).

As one can see, there is much in Wahid's thinking which aligns nicely with Habermas's ideas. Moreover, in opposition to the bias we detected in the latter,

---

<sup>76</sup>The Melayu term '*pribumi*' derives from terms designating a 'person of the earth' or 'of the soil'. Thus, there is a reference to the 'earthing' of concepts, theories and whatever else referred to when the term is put to use. It is not difficult to see the link between this 'earthing' and concepts of incarnation. For mention of contextualization in Christian contexts, see note 88 below.



Wahid as a Muslim intellectual summons the prophetic resources for democraticisation and a proliferation of fora for participation directly from his religious convictions. Wahid illustrates how, as opposed to occluding democratic participation in communities of practice, religious commitment can just as easily give rise to it by way of a prophetic vision of a just society based upon global principles of consultation and arbitration.<sup>77</sup>

Therefore, we have seen that the neo-modernist Indonesian Muslim is not at all antagonistic to democracy by predisposition—nor would such a person see participatory procedures as something alien to his or her Islamic principles. Gus Dur is representative of a growing number of Muslim democrats in Indonesia today who are working hard to promote a more just, open and civil society based upon broad-based access to participatory involvement. There should be no great difficulty *prima*

---

<sup>77</sup>Hefner overtly links what he sees as a broad-scale emergence of democratic values in the greater Muslim world with emergence of something akin to Habermas's concept of the public sphere (see page 172 above): 'In many respects, what is happening in the Muslim world resembles what the German sociologist Jurgen Habermas described some years ago as the emergence of the "public sphere" in the West. Habermas's study of eighteenth-century European society emphasized that public arenas, like coffee houses, literary clubs, journals, and "moral weeklies," helped to create an open and egalitarian culture of participation. Habermas suggests that this development provided vital precedent for the next century's struggles for democratic representation.

'Habermas has been criticized for overlooking the degree to which there were competing notions of public interaction in eighteenth-century Europe and other public spheres, not least of all religious. Habermas has also been rightly faulted for exaggerating the egalitarianism of the eighteenth-century public by overlooking exclusions based on wealth, gender, and religion. Like Alexis de Tocqueville's observations on democracy in America, however, Habermas's analysis has the virtue of emphasizing that democratic life depends not just on government but on resources and habits in society at large. Formal democracy requires a culture and organization greater than itself.

'The question this comparison raises, of course, is whether the heightened participation and pluralization so visible in the Muslim world heralds an impending acceleration of the democratization process. For some observers, the answer to this question is a resounding no. These skeptics argue that the Muslim resurgence contradicts one of the central premises of democratic and Habermasian theory, namely, that for a society to democratize, religion must retreat from the public stage to the privacy of personal belief. Privatization, critics insist, is a condition of democratic peace.

'[A] revised understanding of religion in the West now casts doubt on this unitary view of democracy and modernity' (2000:11; in this book Hefner explicitly illustrates his point by way of the Indonesian example).

Of course, in the analysis above there has been a call for a similar revision of the role which religion could (should?) take in Habermasian theory and in engendered speech events as well.

*facie* in promoting the six marks of the incarnation as a model for participation within the country, seeing as how there are many Indonesian Muslim scholars who would likely heartily embrace such a call, provided it led to authentic participatory practice.

A qualification is in order, however. While it is true that there is no problem here *prima facie*, as one digs a bit deeper there do remain two fundamental concerns which need to be considered—potential hindrances which might stand in the way of a wider promotion of the model as it has been presented here. Designating these areas the historical challenge and the structural challenge, I would now like to briefly touch upon each in turn.

\*\*\*

First, the historical challenge. More than once we have underscored the reinvigoration of the role of *ijtihād*' (independent analysis) in the process of the democratization of Islam.<sup>78</sup> Such an observation is not unique to this study. Indeed, arising from within the global Islamic community itself—generally seen as commencing toward the beginning of the nineteenth century CE—a call has repeatedly been issued for the re-opening of the gate of *ijtihād*' so as to democratise and revitalise Islamic scholarship and polity. In fact, over the last fifty years or so the demand has gained such momentum that one finds the topic to be at the centre of a good deal of present-day Islamic theorising. A positive response to this call seems a must if anything approaching the sort of participative procedures advocated above is to take root.

---

<sup>78</sup>See pages 63ff in Chapter Two and page 191 above.



There is actually evidence to suggest that a certain form of egalitarianism is what prevailed in the earliest days of Islam. Louise Marlow has devoted an entire book to the topic,<sup>79</sup> claiming that

...in certain respects, the Islamic tradition of classical times may be said to be strikingly egalitarian. By the end of the formative period, neither a church nor a priesthood had developed, and classical Islamic law, with the significant exception of marriage equality, overwhelmingly assumed the equality of free male believers (1997:1-2)<sup>80</sup>.

Springing from these early republican beginnings, classical Islamic jurisprudence eventually put forward four primary sources for law: (1) the Qur'an, (2) the *Sunnah* or example of the Prophet Muhammad as embodied in reliable traditions (*hadith*) compiled and handed down through the Islamic community, (3) *Qiyas* or analogical reasoning, should a clear legal precedent be lacking, and (4) *Ijma* or community consensus, which generally refers to consensus on the part of the *majelis ulama* or council of Islamic scholars (Esposito 1991:20). While the process of adjudication has, in practice, been more intricate and innovative than such an idealised picture,<sup>81</sup> an arrangement approximating this does seem to have worked reasonably well in early Islam, to the point that, as its by-product, a significant

---

<sup>79</sup>As is the case for many Islamic scholars—inclusive of Abdurrahman Wahid and especially Nurcholish Madjid—Marlow makes much of the radical monotheism (*tawhīd*) upon which Islam is based as the engendering cause in Islam's early egalitarian quality. The logic is, if no one and nothing besides *Allah* is sacred, then everything and everyone else is of a lower, created status. This is seen as resulting in all persons equal before God.

<sup>80</sup>Marlow footnotes the point about marital inequality, referring the reader to his first chapter at which point he addresses this exception (:30-34).

<sup>81</sup>The classical statement of the sources of law overlooked the important roles played by the personal interpretation, or judgment (*ijtihad*), of early judges and jurists. Even more important was the bulk of customary practices which, if judged not contrary to Islam, were adopted and incorporated in the law books' (Esposito 1991:20).

amount of multi-disciplinary creativity and intellectual exchange were spawned over the course of the first two centuries of the new faith.

However, toward the middle of the ninth century CE—midway through the Abbasid dynasty—there arose a calcification of the legal process. At that time

the Islamic scholars, *ulama*, declared the Gate of *ijtihad* (independent analysis) closed and opted for increasingly dysfunctional theological teachings at the expense of rational and empirical study. While Islamic scholarship stagnated, Europe emerged out of its Dark Ages; the Renaissance led to the Age of Enlightenment, great scientific and geographic discoveries followed culminating in the Industrial Revolution. By then, the centre of economic gravity had shifted westwards away from the land of Islam. New prosperity paralleled the growth of human rights, especially in the nineteenth century following the age of liberty ushered in by the French Revolution. While colonialism and imperialism contributed to western prosperity and power at the expense of other parts of the globe, the economic rise of the west resulted fundamentally from the emergence of the nation-state designing and implementing public policy to promote national well-being (Mehmet 1990:2).

On the whole, the gate has thereafter remained closed over the years in much of the Islamic world, with an emphasis on *taqlid* and a focus on its supporting practices (mechanised memorization, chanting and recitation) prevailing as the preferred—and sometimes only permissible—style of education. We previously noted Gus Dur's dissatisfaction with such a style at Al-Azhar University in the early 60s.<sup>82</sup> And—as was seen in Chapter Two—such a position has served to buttress traditional hierarchical patterns in West Java for quite some time now, with stratified, non-participatory cultural manifestations like the 'Mandatory Decorum of *Acara*' gaining even more currency as a result—in fact, this emphasis on *taqlid* has resulted in a virtual sacralisation of hierarchical structures, as we saw in Chapter Two as well. All

---

<sup>82</sup>See page 194.



of this has been the bane of existence for Middle Region residents of Karang Resik these last thirty years, since it so readily lends itself to a buttressing of feudalistically-flavoured relationships of patronage—where those holding religious power subjugate those framed as less religious (cf. Mehmet 1990:58, 59).

Such a system...is neither feasible or desirable. It is too elitist. It runs contrary to the Islamic principles of egalitarianism and populism. It therefore needs to be replaced by a new system of checks and balances limiting political authority: 'people's power', or the accountability of the ruler directly to the subjects (1990:73).

A new wind encouraging a wide-ranging practice of *ijtihād*' seems now to be blowing. But what is necessary is even greater promotion of such openness within the Islamic community, a task taken up recently by quite a few Muslim thinkers—typified, as we saw, by Abdurrahman Wahid and Nurcholish Madjid from within Indonesia and by persons like Fazlur Rahman, Ozay Mehmet and Mohamed Arkoun (amongst many others) from the outside.<sup>83</sup>

...*Ijtihād*, instead of being piecemeal and *ad hoc*, as it has been so far, must be systematic, comprehensive, and long range. Further, it must be understood that when one speaks of *ijtihād* one is not speaking of a single infallible act of some uniquely privileged mind that would show Muslims 'The Way' once and for all. To think that some paragon of virtue and knowledge is going to give a final *ijtihād* on all matters is not only naïve but extremely dangerous. *Ijtihād* must be a multiple effort of thinking minds—some naturally better than others, and some better than others in various areas—that confront each other in an open arena of debate, resulting eventually in an overall consensus. This is the only way open to us now (Rahman 1979:325).

We have seen how much in common Abdurrahman Wahid's ideas have with Habermas's Discourse Ethics—but, this time, issued by way of Islamic, religiously-informed perspectives. Notions such as communal consensus, freedom and justice

---

<sup>83</sup>For a look at the latter's thought, see Arkoun 1994 and 1998.

are not tangential to his thinking—on the contrary, they seem at its very heart.

Tangible actuation of these ideas remains a formidable task. Though much progress has already been made, one can only hope that more will be forthcoming.

\*\*\*

Now we must turn to the structural challenge. This label seems appropriate since, at a significant point, Islam stands in stark contrast to the incarnational model presented herein and, arising historically out of the logic of pan-Islamic theological thought, the problem seems sublated within the very anatomy of the faith itself.<sup>84</sup>

It is widely acknowledged that Islam as an historically conceptualised theological system does not abide concepts of incarnation easily. This springs from the centrality of the notion of radical monotheism (*tawhīd*),<sup>85</sup> a doctrine vouchsafing God's absolute uniqueness—and thus, in Islamic terms, precluding any concept of incarnation or 'humbling' of the divine. Equating anything with God—making something or someone his partner—constitutes Islam's most grievous sin, this finding its designation in the Arabic term *shirk* (Ward 1994:176). If by definition nothing can share in God's divine nature, revelation in an Islamic sense cannot possibly be the disclosure of God's person as it is in Christianity; instead it must be limited to the expression of God's will. Yaqub Zaki explains:

Returning to the downward movement of *inzal* [sending down], concomitant with God's transcendence (*mukhalafa*), it is with this doctrine that Islam demolishes all notions of immanence, in-dwelling

---

<sup>84</sup>That assessed below will be traditionally-framed, scriptural Islam—other variants, most notably Sufistic, mystical Islam (*tasawuf*), do not present nearly as many difficulties for our motif; nonetheless, in as much as this is the case, it is also true that these same variants encounter similar condemnation from more orthodox, traditionalist strains as could our motif. For a look at the relationship of more mystical strains of Islam to Christianity, see Ward 1994:189-190.

<sup>85</sup>Note previous reference to *tawhīd* above in note 79.



or pantheism. Likewise, incarnation (*hulul*): any religion predicated on the basis of incarnationism runs the risk of eroding the ontological boundaries that separate man from God. Pantheism is the negation of all hierarchy and, ultimately, of all worth. By defining *wahi* [revelation] as *inzal*, a descent from a higher plane on to a lower, Islam wishes to signal to us that here is a basic pattern of movement in the universe, on the basis of which much can be predicated, not least politics. Politics is in fact no different from religion: truth comes from on high and on the way down it is met by responsibility moving up. Society is regulated by law and in the Islamic state the source of law is divine. Thus, *wahi* taking the form of descent provides us with a paradigm for the structure of both society and state... (1991:44-45).

Cragg makes a similar point:

...The substance of what God reveals is the divine will rather than the divine nature, and...the end of revelation is obedience rather than perfect knowledge. God sends rather than comes. The God who makes plain remains above. Revelation is by *tanzil*, as the phrase goes, by 'causing to come down'; God is withdrawn in *tanzih*, 'transcendence' (1985:41-42).

Springing from this, knowledge and learning tends to be imposed and dispensed in character, since 'Islam is a clear case of a propositional revelation' (Ward 1994:174).<sup>86</sup> According to Islam, in the revelatory process at the time the Qur'an was transmitted to the prophet Muhammad, what took place amounted to a conveyance of divine information, canalized through God's chosen servant who was little more than an amanuensis in the process. In theological terms this is often designated a 'dictation theory' of inspiration.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup>We might recall here the distinction made in Chapter Two (note 47) between Paulo Freire's 'banking' and 'problem-posing' methods of education. If what I am saying here is correct, the tendency in Islam would be toward the former, which would make it subject to all of the critique befitting such a style.

<sup>87</sup>As Zaki asserts: '...The Qur'an affirms that it is but the transcript of a celestial archetype, which is why the Prophet is abjured to add or subtract [*sic*] nothing but to adhere strictly to the text that is given him. *Inzal* therefore refers to the sending-down of a text, its vesture in sounds and words' (1991:46).

The contrast with the biblical conception of inspiration and knowledge most widely accepted in Christian thought could not be more clearly drawn. For Muslims, what rises before the worshipper brooks no space for incarnation; instead, it might best be described as a process of 'incodification'. As Denny says,

the place of the Qur'an in the life of the Muslims is only in limited ways like that of the Bible in the lives of Jews and Christians. Scholars have observed that in relation to Christianity, the Qur'an may be usefully compared with Christ, in that it is believed to be God's Word that has miraculously come down into the world in history and humankind. If in Christianity the 'Word became flesh,' in Islam it became a book. And the book is properly appropriated and applied only when it is recited live in a context of belief and obedience (1994:144).<sup>88</sup>

Thus, a focus on recitation and chanting of the holy Arabic—the celestial message become book—lies at the heart of all faithful worship.

---

<sup>88</sup>In an analysis of the function of art in Islam, Kenneth Cragg teases out the distinction adroitly: 'The divine in the didactic is the meaning of calligraphy. Islam, we might say, marries with the cursive flow of the Arabic hand and the authority of that ever-running script, with its endless occasions of artistic freedom within the rigorous constraints of its curving shapes and lines and parallels, occupies Islamic art hardly less thoroughly than the scripture determines its religion. The believer must be reader, not spectator. He will not be educated by imagery, only by the text. It is the pen, celebrated in the Qur'ān, which merits the perpetual pride of hand and eye. The high dignity of writing fostered the arts at large and in the margins of the written texts the miniaturists first perfected their designs. All the crafts, whether in wood, or leather, or bronze, or glass, or tile, or clay, were necessarily crafts with the sacred word. But the mosque surfaces, whether in the splendour of the Haram at Jerusalem, or the Sulaymaniyyah in Istanbul, were the noblest writing scrolls of all.

'Where idea, theme, claim, meaning, or the founding history of his faith, meet the mind of the Muslim, it is supremely through the literal text. There is no more utterly textual religion than Islam. There is no pictorial: the legible suffices. God Himself is denoted by Arabic script within a circle, just as Muḥammad is' (1979:281).

In a similar vein, Cragg cites the following from Sayyid Hasain Nasr: 'The sacred art of Islam is related in both form and spirit to the divine Word as revealed in the Holy Qur'ān. The word having been revealed as a Book, rather than as a human being...the sacred art concerns the manifestation of the letters and the sounds of the Book, rather than the iconography of the man who is himself the Logos...Mosque architecture creates a space in which the divine Word is echoed...The space created inside a mosque, far from being arbitrary or accidental, is planned deliberately to remove those...tensions which would prevent the Word from spreading in an illimitable and harmonious space, a space filled with peace and equilibrium in which the Spirit is everywhere, rather than being localised in a particular ikon or statue...Islam refuses to imprison the Spirit or the Word in any form which would endanger the freedom innate to the Spirit and kill its reflections through imprisonment in matter' (1979:283).

As one reads these words, however, one wonders if the text itself does not imprison the Spirit and the Word; text being inanimate, Spirit animate.



This has bearing upon the relationship Islam postulates between the nature of truth on the one hand and the role of language and culture in its transmission on the other. Lamin Sanneh, raised a Muslim in Gambia, claims that a primary distinction between Islam and Christianity is in the way each of these systems advocates propagation—the former undertaken by way of dissemination (a centre-periphery, topo-centric, outwardly expanding scheme), the latter contracted by way of a process Sanneh calls translation (with parallels evident to what many Christian missiologists label contextualization)<sup>89</sup> (1989:211-238). Since the Qur'an itself sets the stage by virtue of its inherent untranslatability, to take on the faith is, at a certain level, to be Arabised. In light of Islam's own internal logic, such a conclusion seems almost unavoidable.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup>We heard Gus Dur use this term above to describe one of the central ingredients for an Islamic approach that safeguards the five basic needs of humankind (see page 197). For a representative look at the Christian missiological notion of contextualization, see Gilliland 1989, Bevans 1992, Bosch (esp. 1991:420-432) or Shorter 1994. Charles Taber provides a good summary of the Christian missiological notion when he says 'what all true contextualists have in common is the attempt to take the concrete human context in all its dimensions with utmost seriousness. The *particularity* of each milieu becomes the starting point for both the questions and the answers which will shape the evangelistic process and its aftermath in the life of the new church' (1983:119, emphasis in the original).

It would be an interesting study to examine how closely Gus Dur's concept aligns with the Christian missiological connotation—a study we are not at liberty to take up here.

<sup>90</sup>Sanneh points to geographical and spatial implications of this: "...Whereas the Muslim *hijrah* [emigration] bequeathed a legacy of geographical and linguistic centrality, the Christian Pentecost created the reverse. The *hijrah* was not merely the *flight* to safety of the Prophet and his community (though as a strategy it did accomplish that) but the event which marks the historic birth of Islam. The intensity of the event helps dissolve all autonomous claims for mother tongues. The *hijrah* is thus the reversal of Pentecost. The Muslim confides in Arabic, the Christian in what lies to hand. Muslims celebrate the *mawlid*, the Prophet's birthday, in a lunar cycle that spins on the *hijrah*. Christians, by contrast, scarcely know the Bethlehem of the Christ child, turning instead to places and events thrust up by time's hallowed hand. Muslims are revived from the innocence of their first century youth, whereas Christians find strength in the centuries-long expansion of Christianity. Muhammad had no need of Paul or Constantine. Christ has need of both' (1989:219-220). The inherent linguistic pliability of Christianity, its shifting historical centre of gravity ('...places and events thrust up by time's hallowed hand') and its 'need of Paul and Constantine' as envoys and ambassadors of the faith (however faithfully) simply reaffirms a travelling component latent within the incarnation motif, as I have underscored above.

An additional implication of Islam's notion of radical monotheism and its consequent stress on propositional truth is that the notion of divine, incarnational self-sacrifice is theologically disallowed by the logic of Islam, seeing as how it could threaten to dishonour God. This includes any sort of self-sacrifice on the part of God's envoys.

[According to Islamic orthodoxy]...hostility to prophets should not succeed in slaying them. Such a climax would be a divine failure to sustain them and corroborate their message. Such a failure would be unthinkable. Noah, Abraham, Moses, David—all saw the confusion of their opponents and the vindication of themselves. Muhammad, though rejected by the idolatrous Meccans, lived to capture Mecca and destroy the idols. So also Jesus. God will not, cannot, allow faithful servants to suffer ignominy, or allow their detractors a final triumph. So Jesus did not suffer. It was more appropriate to the nature of things, divine and prophetic, that Judas should have taken his place—a proper end for him, a manifest outwitting of the Jews and a fitting climax for Jesus. How far indeed from the sense of the Gospels and 'the cup that my Father has given me' (Cragg 1985:266).

In an earlier piece of writing to that cited above, Sanneh (1984) explains his initial interest in Christianity by pointing precisely to the New Testament image of incarnation, a concept he claims also to be found in popular Islam (centred on the prophet Muhammad) but one which is, nevertheless, theologically forbidden by pan-Islamic orthodoxy (since only God may be so esteemed—and since orthodox Islam rejects all boosting of Muhammad toward the divine).

It was through Muhammad that we came to God as a moral, ethical, and eschatological reality. God the abstract being arrived by the agency of the Prophet as the judge, the avenger, and the benefactor of humans. The Prophet was the human measure of an otherwise unapproachable transcendence, the unerring beacon in the vast sea of divine infinitude. Indeed official theology stresses this fact by condemning any attempt to ascribe a divine status to the Prophet, for it would be natural to do so given his role. Some of the severity of that condemnation is no doubt to be accounted for by the need to set it off from the Christian view of Jesus Christ, but the instinct is authentically Islamic. Divinity, in this view, is compromised by



personification. Thus relative criteria, whether personal or metaphorical, should not be allowed to expound, let alone embody, absolute truth, and as a consequence the Prophet was kept as a human agent strictly stripped of divine titles.

Yet the issue is by no means settled by an adamant orthodoxy. You cannot introduce Muhammad the Prophet as the specific medium of the divine revelation and then throttle him lest he take off as a serious contender for divine titles. By stressing the mortality of the Prophet, official theology had still not succeeded in closing the gap between his authorized function as divine instrument and his devotional role as intercessor and comforter (1984:169).

But, once again, the officially promoted position is that, in relation to the divine, the prophet is mere human conduit. Sanneh's argument is that this renders the cry of the human heart for incarnational relationship with the divine no choice but to seek satiation elsewhere—for the Muslim, oftentimes illicitly in Muhammad, for the Christian, legitimately in Jesus.<sup>91</sup>

Consequently, instead of being intimately interpersonal, Islamic theological truth claims tends to be rigidly doctrinal—inclusive of that brought to bear upon social theory. This is why when a Muslim scholar as doctrinally affable as Fazlur Rahman calls for a renewed schema to Qur'anic interpretive methodology, he still can hardly

---

<sup>91</sup>Sanneh elaborates on the reasoning in the following way: 'A modern major biography of Muhammad, echoing the Qur'an, displays prominently on the cover the line about Muhammad being sent as a mercy to the world (*wa mā arsalnāka illa raḥmata li-l-'alamīn*). In other words, the messenger (*al-rasūl*) is part of the message (*al-risālah*). God, who normally delegates his authority to the prophets, is committed to the logic of that delegation by being willing to express himself in one such prophet who, by virtue of that special relationship, must henceforth be described by the strong language of filiation. Rather than rendering him immune to the tragedy of human disobedience, such a prophet is in fact the supreme subject and victim of its consequences. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." No proximity to the human condition is more poignant than that. It is too lifelike to be mistaken for what it is, a full-blooded encapsulation of the original divine intention. God through him would know our plight and feel our sorrow. Jesus is God in full engagement. Put to grief in the unspeakable agony of human sinfulness, Jesus is the definitive measure of God's "numbing" capacity to take on our suffering, the Suffering Servant now unenviably receiving the double *ṣalāt* of God and human beings. The Suffering Servant is God's self-portrait, and our unflattering witness.

'Our perception of this truth is indispensable to our obtaining a right and fulfilling relationship with God. Redemptive suffering is at the very core of moral truth, and the prophets were all touched by its fearsome power. But only One embodied it as a historical experience, although all, including the Prophet of Islam, walked in its shadow. Those who consult their hearts will hear for themselves the persistent ordinance proclaiming God's ineffable grace' (1984:173-174).

avoid emphasising 'legal enunciations' and 'legal prescriptions' with a view toward '...deriv[ing] systematic legislation from the Qur'ān' (1979:325-326). In such a system, the sacralisation of hierarchical 'sending down' processes like that lauded by Zaki<sup>92</sup> can scarcely be resisted, since one stands before impersonal code which demands obedience. The worshipper is subjected to truth propositionally configured with little chance for protest before God or before God's envoys—be they global prophets or local representatives. Such a style can easily give rise to divinely-sanctioned, impersonal pecking orders and positions of power, akin to those we saw operative in Karang Resik. Though Zaki seems to condone this result as well, our analysis thus far surely point us in another direction.

Theologically, we are in need of a way out of this difficulty. It is here that theologian George Lindbeck offers assistance. He specifies three distinct types of doctrine or theological styles, each evincing its own particular logic or disposition. The first he entitles classical propositionalism (1984:24), a variety which '...emphasizes the cognitive aspects of religion and stresses the ways in which...doctrines function as informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities....For a propositionalist, if a doctrine is once true, it is always true, and if it is once false, it is always false' (1984:16). Of course, this is clearly what we have seen to be the prevailing pattern in much of Islamic thought (though Christians must concede, it is also that embraced by the vast majority of conservative Christians).

The second type of doctrine Lindbeck designates experiential-expressive. Typical of theological liberalism as well as of much of the work done in the area of

---

<sup>92</sup>See page 204.



comparative religions, this variety delights in amalgamating all distinctions into a common experiential soup—it pictures ‘different religions [as] diverse expressions or objectifications of a common core experience’ (1984:31) or as ‘...an expression or thematization of a preexisting self or of preconceptual experience’ (1984:34). In short, it reduces all religious aspirations to a unitary, globally-familiar experiential kernel variously expressed but commonly experienced—irrespective of cultural backdrops or distinctive themes. However, this sort of style can easily be reduced to a form of elitist intellectual insight, with scholars framed as the only ones truly aware that, although different persons religious describe their experiences with widely divergent language, images and devices, they are in fact speaking of the same thing. Garden variety religious adherents, these academics seems to suggest, simply do not know that they are in actuality speaking of (and sometimes worshipping) the same concept.

In contrast to the above two options, Lindbeck advocates what he calls a cultural-linguistic alternative. Having much in common with Wittgenstein’s image of ‘language games’, this framework dialectically combines the content element of the first type above with the experiential element of the second. In this way, a religious tradition is

...viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought. It functions somewhat like a Kantian *a priori*, although in this case the *a priori* is a set of acquired skills that could be different. It is not primarily an array of beliefs about the true and the good (though it may involve these), or a symbolism expressive of basic attitudes, feelings, or sentiments (though these will be generated). Rather, it is similar to an idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings, and sentiments. Like a culture or language, it is a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than being primarily a

manifestation of those subjectivities. It comprises a vocabulary of discursive and nondiscursive symbols together with a distinctive logic or grammar in terms of which this vocabulary can be meaningfully deployed. Lastly, just as a language...is correlated with a form of life, and just as a culture has both cognitive and behavioral dimensions, so it is also in the case of a religious tradition. Its doctrines, cosmic stories or myths, and ethical directives are integrally related to the rituals it practices, the sentiments or experiences it evokes, the actions it recommends, and the institutional forms it develops. All this is involved in comparing a religion to a cultural-linguistic system (1984:33).

Both internal beliefs held as well as external experiences undergone coalesce in a given community to help shape the nature of beliefs and doctrine. At the heart of such a construct, competent language ability and the opportunity to voice one's view in that community are key components—something emphasised both by Robert Chambers and Jürgen Habermas, not to mention by Wahid.

Directly related to Lindbeck's taxonomy, Walter Brueggemann builds upon these categories, labelling the experiential-expressive 'subjectivism' and the classical propositional 'objectivism'. Similar to Lindbeck, Brueggemann claims that both '...are forms of theological reductionism that distort the claims of biblical faith' (1989:149, n..4). Brueggemann, however, goes on to articulate the results of such a reduction.

The first reductionism, I submit, leads to anxious *alienation*, and the second leads to a deep *rage*. The first believes that all justice questions are irrelevant because there are no real questions requiring justice. The second reductionism believes there is a norm for justice; God is always right. If God is always right, I am wrong most of the time....The one invites me to exaggerate trust in my own judgment. The other requires me to disregard my own judgment for the sake of this omnipotent one (1989:48)

Briefly glancing back at the Middle Region residents of Karang Resik, it is not difficult to see which reductionism they have faced in the presence of their NU



and Persis neighbours. Long confronted by severe forms of classical propositionalism, (possibly buttressed by the internal structure of Islam itself), they often have responded in rage—not since God was always right and they were always wrong, but due to that fact that many living near them seemed to take it upon themselves to speak for God. But, once again, when the operative movement is structurally a ‘sending down’ (*tanzīh*), based upon God’s unapproachable *tanzīh*, ‘transcendence’—as opposed to incarnation or ‘coming down’—incontestable hierarchies seem a natural and almost inevitable byproduct.

Returning to Brueggemann, he infers an additional step in all of this by advocating Lindbeck’s third type in order to emphasise the important role discourse plays in a speech community (as we have heard Chambers, Habermas and Gus Dur do).

Such alienation and muted rage have a central characteristic in common: *an absence of conversation, a loss of speech*. In both cases, life is reduced to silence. Where there is theological silence, human life withers and dies. Where there is theological silence, blessed communion is impossible (1989:49, emphasis added).

It is a wider variety of conversation and speech which Islam must ultimately attempt to promote. But, as we have seen, the internal structure of global Islam—predisposed as it is toward propositional truth imposed and dispensed in character which threatens rage and a disregard for alternative voices—could make this a difficult task indeed. As we have seen, however, in persons like Gus Dur there are those willing to take the step. And in light of the internal logic in the faith itself, one is left wondering how much leeway one is afforded in this regard.

It is no accident that, in emphasising the incarnational, Lamin Sanneh also emphasises the linguistic—that which is translatable (as opposed to that which is

simply dispensed or disseminated). At the very heart of a life lived is a linguistically-couched story, a history narrated from within a particular speech community.<sup>93</sup> The notion of incarnation itself has as a portion of its internal logic the notions of language, speech and discourse—since one of the defining characteristics of *homo sapiens* is our ability to fashion thought into words into speech. Thus, Brueggemann can say (in this case, specifically in reference to the church's theological task), 'because language is so crucial to human community, education in the church can be understood as nurture in language, of learning how we speak in this community, what we say, and to whom it may be said. Because language is evocative as well as descriptive, language is crucial in nurturing people to a good confession' (1982:93). This being so, by looking seriously at the incarnational model presented here, Islamic neo-modernists could perhaps reposition themselves to better promote participatory democracy. A good first step would be to tangibly show themselves ready to listen to subaltern voices in their own fold; to persons who see the faith differently than they do—such as the residents in the Hakekat region of Karang Resik. This would be a tangible start toward truly throwing the gate of *ijtihad*' wide open.

---

<sup>93</sup>A point repeatedly stressed by Ricoeur in his three volume *Time and Narrative* (1984-1988).



*Summary of the Appraisal*

Much ground has been covered above. In the process, we have witnessed a good deal of confirmation and corroboration of the incarnational approach to participation—indeed, we have even happened upon much which could augment its implementation. In bringing this chapter to a close, it would be good to summarise in order that we may be better poised for the next chapter in which we will explore an application of the incarnational motif by way of a case study of sorts.

There is clearly a good deal of affinity between incarnational participation and Chambers's approach. By stressing local capabilities and valuing local knowledge, PRA echoes a concern for servitude, for emptying and for reversals—elements also featured in incarnation. Furthermore, the incarnational method can be enhanced by taking up Chambers's six rural poverty biases as a template in order to ensure sustained involvement in a concrete manner. Moreover, by adopting PRA's emphasis on visual and comparative tools for instruction and research, methods for the democratisation of processes in communities can be made available as we work in locales with high instances of textual illiteracy. Finally, the focus on open participation and speech in community accords well with our incarnational emphasis on interpersonal involvement. As we have seen, free and open discourse and consensus are also points emphasised by Jürgen Habermas and Abdurrahman Wahid. Moreover, since the narrative component of the incarnational approach emphasises linguistic and communicative interaction in community, this is part and parcel of what is being advocated here as well.

But we do need to be aware of PRA's limitations. On the one hand, we must not make Chambers's mistake of idealising and romanticising local communities.

As we have seen in Karang Resik, constructs local but also structural in nature related to gender, class, ethnicity or religious allegiance often play an enormous role in how primary stakeholders in local communities maintain their positions and hold sway over others. For Chambers ‘...there is a proclivity to refrain from problematising “local knowledge” as though it is naturally benign. Yet patriarchal community institutions, which prohibit women from inheritance and land rights, or parochialisms such as xenophobia, are far from incontestable’ (Kapoor 2002:112).

We find resources to correct this in our overview of Habermas’s thought.<sup>94</sup>

Likewise, this is where our analysis of patronage alliances can be used as an optic to assist us in teasing out whatever unjust power differentials might be inherent there. But it must be remembered that, as has already been emphasised, this will take time in residence in the community—it will require concrete, communal incarnational involvement.

From another angle, neither should we approach local communities of impoverishment naïvely as if they were isolated from the larger economic and political world. Systemic factors spinning about at this level often play a significant part in the impoverishment and disenfranchising of local communities—sometimes causally so. And since these factors are developed outside of the local context, most local residents have little control when confronted by them. But, as we have seen, this does not mean that local communities simply roll over and become passive. Most of the time, there are pockets of resistance existing in a subaltern fashion—like

---

<sup>94</sup>The entirety of Kapoor’s article *The Devil’s in the Theory* is essentially the recommendation of Habermasian theory as a good complement to Chambers’s practice, since it can provide the theoretical rigour and the methodology for performative ethics and standards. I also have made a similar point above.



those we saw in Karang Resik. It is here that our focus on patient incarnational involvement over time can be most helpful. Furthermore, if we can throw off our Western biases against religious sensibilities and realise their prophetic potential, we can access a motivating vision as well as language with which to construct counter discourse against these external systemic factors. Of course, as a model based upon a religious vision of participation, incarnational participation manifests resources here of significant use—as illustrated by Walter Brueggemann’s emphasis on the Hebrew prophet.

In relation to Clifford Geertz’s thought, it must be said that attention to the symbolic includes within it an emphasis on matters linguistic as well. In being a primary advocate of the ‘linguistic turn’ in the social sciences, Geertz has placed heavy emphasis on this factor. This has involved both a concern for the interpretive nature of anthropology as a social science as well as an emphasis on two-way, dialogical features to field work. This is neither a small thing nor is it unique to Geertz. Jürgen Habermas on the global stage and Abdurrahman Wahid on the Indonesian one have both made a good deal out of the hermeneutic and linguistic component to democratic discourse. What is more, we also found manipulation and an adroit use of language to be a key tool in the ‘weapons of the weak’ arsenal of Middle Region Karang Resik residents. And as has already been pointed out, this is also an ingredient of the incarnational approach.

We might also take note of Geertz’s emphasis on the process of tacking between experience-near and experience-distant involvement. This seems quite similar to the travelling facet emphasised in the incarnational motif in Chapter Three. The experience-near end of the spectrum emphasises qualities akin to the notion of

belonging whereas the experience-distant posture has more in common with the status of outsider. Once again, a concern for adaptability and flexibility is very evident in this. In the end, the goal is that would-be external participants would ‘...identify themselves with the people and play the double role of subsuming people’s knowledge into professional terminology and re-translating macro-knowledge into popular language’ (Shiva and Bandyopadhyay 1981:123). We simply cannot avoid the dialectic position of participant in tension—something which Geertz seems to appreciate..

We have also encountered some less than positive qualities in Geertz. We have seen that when it comes to tangibility and accountability—physical encountering and social embedment—his example has for quite some time under-exhibited evidence of physical embedment in the local communities in which he purportedly participated. This being the case, he becomes perforce construed *de facto* as the expert mediator—the cultural scene broker—of that experience which he is trying to communicate. This effectively decouples whatever experience-near contexts he might have gone through from experience-distant ones he thereafter describes. Such a posture of expertise, both before the local community as well as before the outside reader, does little to enhance his participatory stature. In fact, it renders specious his call for two-way, dialogical features, notwithstanding his call for Ricouerian approaches to hermeneutics in the social sciences. This is an area in which Geertz might be complemented by Habermas’s methodological rigour.

As a counter example to such a decoupling, the above cultural analysis in Chapter Two included a good bit of original data (in the form of Indonesian statements usually found in footnotes alongside English translations) in the



presentation of field work, in order that the reader might arbitrate the quality of the analysis undertaken there, better positioning him or her to weigh conclusions proffered. This seems a necessary facet for all anthropological, field-based research approaches should they wish to be sincerely framed as participatory.

Habermas offers us a level of methodological rigour very helpful to any quest for authentic participation. While our six marks of participation can serve as a benchmark for concrete involvement in local communities, Habermas's procedural ethics and his focus on undistorted discourse help to actuate as well as measure tangible and wide-spread involvement of participants in local communities—with appraisal based upon redeemable claims assessed by residents in the community themselves. As Kapoor has pointed out, this is a serious deficiency on the part of Chambers's PRA.

...The absence of a regulating principle...deprives Chambers of any systematic way of checking power relationships in the PRA space. Chambers shares with Habermas the view that interlocutors can work their way past power relationships through public discussion. But to this end, Habermas comes equipped with both ideal speech situation and rational debate; Chambers does not (2002:108).

As we attempt participatory involvement, Habermas's concern with discourse and its attendant rationality—buttressed by his four universal validity-claims of speech—offer a potent means for reducing power inequities and distorted communication in the local context. This holds whether these distortions find their genesis in the local context or at the national or international level.

Still in relation to PRA, Habermas's focus upon discourse in community is very similar to that envisioned by Chambers, although, once again, Habermas would do well to focus more of his attention at the level of the local participant. Surely

weaving some of Chambers's concern with local involvement into Habermas's framework might serve to actuate more instances of Habermasian communicative ethics at the village level.

Similarities between Habermas's ideas and other theories we have explored might also be noted. As we have seen, Indonesian intellectual Abdurrahman Wahid also gives attention to dialogue in community and consensus-building, albeit inspired by way of a religious vision. As Western academics, Chambers, Geertz and Habermas have resisted such a step. However, Wahid illustrates that such resistance is not a foregone conclusion—even though he does this from within a tradition which seems to threaten sacralised hierarchical structural elements not entirely amenable to discursive deliberation in community. How Wahid and other Muslim Democrats like him will deal with this dilemma remains to be seen. However, deal with it they must if they wish to effect anything similar to the sort of incarnational approach being advocated here.

Thus, there have been many commonalities in that just presented—an egression of common attributes cohered around several similar themes. First, there has been a repeated emphasis on words, language and communication. Participation, at the very least, is marked by an individual's ability to gather in the community, to hear and to be heard. When faced with the slippery nature of language,<sup>95</sup> with what Max-Neef takes as language's domesticating ability to justify<sup>96</sup> or with Freire's

---

<sup>95</sup>Page 135.

<sup>96</sup>Page 136.



‘culture of silence’,<sup>97</sup> efforts toward authentic participation need counter-discourse—alternative speech and voices must be able to speak truth to power. We have seen this to be an integral part of Chambers’s thought, of Habermas’s theory and of the vision of Abdurrahman Wahid. Even Geertz has put forward an understanding of reality from the local perspective as being the ultimate goal of all good ethnography: ‘The trick is,’ he says, ‘to figure out what the devil [local people] think they are up to.’

But as we have seen, this is easier said than done. According to Habermas, local contexts—as well as those national and international—are awash with systematically distorted ‘communication’ and coerced ‘participation’ (what we have referred to above as participation ‘coopted’ in nature and thus not truly authentic). The representatives of all four of the disciplines surveyed present ideas as to how such distortion might be kept in check. In each case, at the heart of the process is the fashioning of contextual fora conducive to faithful, open, free and undistorted interpretation—a process quite similar to what Islamic scholars call the opening of the gate of *ijtihad*’ to a wider and more inclusive community of participants and meaning-seekers. And a critique of the knowledge of the expert constitutes a significant part of that process, whether it is centred on prevailing forms of expert scientism in the halls of academia, expert religious authority embraced in the mosque or the church, or expert political authority brandished in city hall. While rationality remains a necessary component—since transparent adjudication of truth claims continues to be essential—in each case the identity of the adjudicators of meaning has

---

<sup>97</sup>Page 135.

been challenged and a call has been issued for a widening of participation in the process. The sense has been that local participants must be able to describe their own world and locate their place in it. As Peter Berger has said,

a meaningful concept of participation will have to include some kind of sharing in the decision-making processes relating to development. Somewhere along the line people must be *asked* their views of the issues at hand, and there must be some political mechanisms by which these views feed into the decisions of those in charge of development policy (1974:119, emphasis in the original).

The above considerations open up ample space for the image of the incarnation as a suitable construct for participatory involvement. With the six marks and their overarching three-fold dialectic nature emphasising humility, divestment, concrete embedment, etc., the quality of participation can be appraised in a way which promises worthy results. While one can certainly learn from Chambers's methods, from Geertz's symbolic approach and his quest for meaning, from Habermas's procedural ethics and from Gus Dur's Islamic framework and his willingness to contextualize from a religious vantage point, the case has been put forward here that authentic participation can only be achieved when would-be participants become narratively enacted, residentially near, physically encountered, socially embedded, flexibly available and verifiably emptied in communities of need. As this is undertaken concretely by outside belongers in community with those in the region, participation will ineluctably take on an authenticity most rare.

We now need to turn to an audit of the application of the incarnational motif. What will unfold below will be a picture less than tidy in terms of the way it was played out in my experience in Karang Resik. But, as will soon be evident, this in and of itself does not represent a repudiation of the motif as a guide to development



practice and participation. On the contrary, since tradition-based contexts which serve as the arenas for all participatory engagement are by nature complex milieus (something seemingly overlooked at times by Chambers), it only stands to reason that outside involvement in these contexts will end up as confusing and humbling experiences. But, incarnation has as a root portion of its make-up an appeal for humility and subordination—qualities dialectically co-existing alongside calls for prophetic challenge and alternative. In fact, it might be argued that precisely to the degree participatory schemas are not equipped for such complexities, they are also ill-suited as heuristic guides for involvement in those same communities. The incarnational motif—understood in light of its six guiding marks for participatory involvement—has the capacity to embrace such complexity, learn from it and even essay to utilise it. That presented below seeks to clarify this point.

## Chapter Five

### Applying the Incarnational Motif—A Case Study and Its Implications

Growing personal affluence and temporal security have made it increasingly difficult to regard the Incarnation as a model for personal action....*Incarnation* [has been rendered] merely a *theologically descriptive*, rather than a *strategically prescriptive*, term (Phil. 2:1-11). It is from the Incarnation, rather than from Marshall McLuhan, that [we] learn that the *medium is the message*. The Living Word must always be made vulnerable flesh (Bonk 1991:115-116).

In this final chapter I intend to test the incarnational motif in terms of its suitability as a model for participatory development practice. To do this I shall look at the effect it has had upon myself and upon local residents of Karang Resik, bringing to the fore several points which were developed in previous chapters.

The reason I include myself in the analysis is because this sort of approach does not leave a person unchanged. In the process of divesting, of travelling, of being flexible, near and encountered, one must learn to adapt, scrutinise, conform and even contend. In literary theory there has often been a call for mutuality between the reader and the text. Over time this has been broadened in the social sciences to include mutuality between contexts and actors as well. I have tried to show in previous chapters that the paradoxes and dialectics which make up such mutuality are part and parcel of the incarnational approach to development practice. This being so, it follows that a defining characteristic of the process of incarnation will include the maturation and development of the one entering the region from the outside. I am here referring to a process similar to the interplay between experience-near and experience-distant encounters which we heard Geertz stress above, what I earlier described as ‘a dialogical tacking back and forth between an internal, participatory



engagement and an external, analytical remove'.<sup>1</sup> I have personally experienced such movements first-hand and, in the process, this has forced many changes in my approach, complications for my perspective and a deepening of my involvement. I like to think that I have matured in the process. I will attempt to highlight this personal development below.

But we must also appraise the tangible effects an incarnational approach has had upon persons residing in the recipient locale. It is fair to say that if my own incarnational involvement in Karang Resik has proved less than appropriate for the purposes of participation with the residents there, then the legitimacy of the incarnational approach as a model for development participation needs to be—at the very least—called into question. I seek to adjudicate the fit of this approach by asking if the incarnational approach has proved apposite and effectual as a model for my own development participation amongst those in Karang Resik. I hope to show that it has.

Finally, we shall appraise the image of the incarnation as motif for participatory development practice in terms of its sensitivity and effectiveness, considering this in the light of my experience in Karang Resik. In the process, I will attempt to draw together several strands of reasoning found in previous chapters. The focus here will not merely be upon my own sensitivity and effectiveness as an outside development practitioner in Karang Resik, but it will also explore the potential the motif exhibits in eliciting responses mirroring the six marks of the incarnation on the part of local populations like those in Karang Resik. As stated

---

<sup>1</sup>For this statement, see page 163 above; for a previous reference to reflexivity, see note 32 in Chapter Four.

above, in the process of development participation, both outsider and insider are faced with a need to change.

I hope to show that, in spite of—and sometimes because of—the complexities apparent in and limitations exhibited by an incarnational approach to participatory involvement as presented here, it remains a robust posture for development practitioners engaged in local, tradition-based communities like Karang Resik. Put plainly, it can serve as a catalyst toward authentic participation.

### *Corroborations of the Incarnational Model*

My basic perspective on development methodology has evolved and developed over time, complete with twists and turns. Hints of the six marks of the incarnation have repeatedly showed up and much in my experience has seemed to affirm these points as helpful and insightful when engaging in community development practice. However, at the outset my views and opinions were tempered by very little real experience—my wife and I had each made only a couple of brief forays outside of our home culture before we embarked upon this new chapter in our life. Needless to say, we had much to learn. This fact will be evident in the following examination of a bit of my own experience in relation to an incarnational approach to participatory development practice.

After completing a master's course in theology and the social sciences in the United States in 1989, my wife and I moved to Indonesia and took up language and culture study. Our goal, over time, was to learn about what it meant to become involved in responsible empowerment of local communities of impoverishment. Thus, with the prospect of substantial personal adaptation looming before us, we



were determined to prepare ourselves for the long haul. Knowing that communication capability was crucial to the inter-relational task set before us, we decided to learn the language well and attune ourselves as sensitively as we could to the local culture. Our concern was that we not fall into the time-worn mistake of insensitively imposing ourselves upon the local population—forcing them into our grid without attempting to learn about their perspective on life. If anyone needed to adapt, we reasoned, it was us, being foreigners. Thus began my (by way of our) pilgrimage in the West Java capital city of Bandung in 1989.<sup>2</sup>

We came to Indonesia with another bias: we believed that the only way to truly gain insight into an insider's perspective was from the people themselves. While we were gladly willing to admit that books and research material were helpful, we knew even then that absolutely nothing could replace engaging with persons firsthand in order to find out what they were up to.<sup>3</sup> Even though our ability to articulate the concept was not at all developed at the time, direct, side-by-side participation was important to us even in those days. Thus, we decided to submit to a 'bonding experience' with the local people, trying as much as we could in our earliest days to learn about Sundanese life by being hosted by insiders from the local context.<sup>4</sup>

In order to do this we resolved during our first week to knock on doors in the city in search of a family from whom we could hire a room and become boarders for

---

<sup>2</sup>For a visual representation of the location of Bandung, see the map of West Java on page 10.

<sup>3</sup>This, of course, echoes a bias we heard voiced by Clifford Geertz in chapter 4; see page 163.

<sup>4</sup>For an explanation of the missiological approach to 'bonding', see Brewster and Brewster 1982.

at least a month. We informed our potential hosts that we wished to eat local food, follow local household schedules and eagerly receive instruction in local customs. We hoped to be shown how to live in West Java—to catch a glimpse into our hosts' viewpoint as to the proper way to run a home and be a local resident.

After several days of searching, we happened upon an elderly couple in their 70s who were up to the challenge. Over the course of our stay (which eventually stretched into two months), we became very close to this couple. They repeatedly made space for us in their home and in the social fabric of their neighbourhood, introducing us as their grandchildren and putting to use their status as elders in the neighbourhood in order to guard and promote our reputations. This couple—whom we eventually called grandfather and grandmother ('Kakek' and 'Nenek' in Indonesian)—patiently showed us the best way to receive guests, how to enter into conversations, how to behave at funerals, weddings and circumcisions and how to handle house help. They even spent a good deal of time schooling us in Indonesian, offering useful explanations concerning the more confusing aspects of the language<sup>5</sup> (while both husband and wife spoke Indonesian, Sundanese and Dutch, it helped that the husband also exhibited a considerable aptitude with English.) We had come to Indonesia with quite a romantic and rose-coloured view of the process of cultural adaptation and this couple seemed to confirm the bulk of our assumptions.

Another person who quickly became a fast friend was my language helper, Asep, a young Sundanese man from just outside the city of Bandung. I originally became acquainted with him by way of his girlfriend, Mina, Kakek and Kakek's

---

<sup>5</sup>For a look at the language methodology we used, see Brewster and Brewster 1976. For a look at how this sort of language approach aligns with what I am here calling the incarnational approach, see Brewster and Brewster 1984.



oldest granddaughter. After two months in country, when my wife and I first felt ready to begin informal, weekly language instruction—utilising Brewster and Brewster’s applied linguistics language learning methodology (1984)—we invited Asep and Mina to be our language tutors. From the beginning—though he was close to five years my junior and thus barely an adult at the time—Asep exhibited a mature wisdom combined with a winsome friendliness. He consistently seemed intent on helping me learn about his country, his culture and his language.

Outside of our weekly prescribed language learning times together, the four of us would often simply ‘hang out’ and have fun, popping into eating establishments, going on tourist outings and imbibing of cultural events. On these occasions, in the event that I would wander into cultural situations or experiences beyond my then-limited comprehension and control, Asep always seemed faithful and eager to guide me through it, with a graceful mixture of well-timed instruction mixed with silence. He seemed to know when to allow me to flounder and when to step in, offering just enough insight in order to direct me to prescribed behaviour without taking advantage of my ever-so-fragile need not to look foolish. I clung to his counsel, even though by cultural standards I was the leader (due to my age). We became close friends and I often almost forgot that we were from different countries. As my language progressed, he began echoing a similar sentiment: ‘Lindy,’ he would say, ‘I keep forgetting that we are not from the same culture.’

As time wore on, my language learning with Asep developed into exercises of social science research focussed upon examinations of Sundanese cultural and religiously-steeped world view and identity. He was a university student studying to become a social worker and he was quite keen to acquire skills that would help him

in this pursuit. We began planning our language lessons round the construction of survey instruments in order that I might better understand my newly adopted home. For him, this meant that he was able to gain experience at every stage of designing a survey instrument: from formulating a working hypothesis, to designing the questionnaire, to isolating a population and constructing a representative sample, to testing the instrument by way of pilot surveys, to selecting and training administrators of the survey in techniques of proper administration of the questionnaire. At every stage we worked through the mechanics of the process, experimenting with the language involved (at which stage he became the expert) as well as focussing upon the mechanics of the process itself (whereupon I would take the lead in terms of decisions and steps to be taken). Not only did we develop a working camaraderie, but the entire experience seemed to stress to him that I was truly interested in his culture and in getting my knowledge of it 'right'. He came to see me as a person who respected his region and who was interested in understanding it and adapting to it as much as I could.

Now, it may seem as if, in Asep, I had simply come into contact with a genuinely nice and decent person. No doubt this is true. Over the past 14 years, virtually everyone I have met who knows him has described him as an altogether likeable individual. But, another factor must be stressed in this. As will be more fully touched upon below, in the earliest stages in a new culture, one can never be sure that the friendliest of acquaintances are actually the most trustworthy.

Oftentimes, precisely those persons who seem most willing to help a visitor in need are exactly those who are seeking to prey upon the ignorance and naïveté of the not yet initiated. Cultural neophytes draw persons like this out of the woodwork since



their innocence is so obvious to everyone. I knew this. Thus, I took risks with Asep—ones which, it is true, ultimately paid off in friendship; but risks they were all the same. I am convinced that my willingness to take chances with Asep—and he with me—is a part of what caused our friendship to develop. It must be remembered that under the third mark of the incarnation in Chapter Three it was stated that a part of what physical encountering entails—besides providing for tangible presence—is an opening up of space for vulnerability and the potential for wounding. In *travelling* toward Asep (leaving my own country and voluntarily taking up long-term residence in his) I believe it became evident to him that I was willing to participate in his world in a weakened fashion in terms of local status and power. This proved that my friendship was being extended in authenticity, and it caused us to be able to build a relationship built upon trust and respect.

An additional instructive experience for my wife and I was a shift in residence we made just after two years of living in the country. When we moved from Kakek and Kakek's residence to a place of our own, my wife and I<sup>6</sup> chose a house just near the university I was to attend.<sup>7</sup> We reasoned that we were within walking distance of the campus and, in the neighbourhood we had chosen, we could get involved in many late-night conversations since it was teeming with university students. We hoped that this would be helpful to our language development since we knew the use of the language was the key to proficiency in it. Indeed, this proved

---

<sup>6</sup>Since our daughter was born in 1993 and our son in 1999, we did not yet have children.

<sup>7</sup>Over the course of my first five years in Indonesia, I was first a student in the Indonesian language and then in the Sundanese language; I thereafter got involved in course work centred upon development studies.

correct and both of us advanced quite quickly in terms of Indonesian language competency.

Nevertheless, it did not take us long to realise that the house we had chosen—while not extravagant by Western standards—was in dissonance with our stated commitment to the poor and to poverty alleviation. Many of our student friends informed us that the size and location of our residence undermined our credibility—bringing about the wrong impression both for persons we were attempting to help as well as for those we hoped to work with. Realising this, we decided to move to a much smaller home in a crowded, impoverished region called Cicadas, one located on the far eastern edge of the city.<sup>8</sup>

We experienced the positive effects of this downward move almost immediately. Just about that time I had become quite involved in the formation of a micro-credit programme—one attached to a non-government organisation (NGO) jointly established by Indonesians and expatriates—and its site of service was a slum area not dissimilar to our new neighbourhood. We discovered that we straightaway won favour with the foundation's co-workers due to our new place of residence. In fact, these persons began to confide in us regarding what they perceived to be an array of internal inequities related to salaries, to hiring practices and to organisational procedures. The root of the grievances almost always stemmed back to dissatisfaction with foundation leaders who, they claimed, did not truly know that faced by the average person on a daily basis. In short, our new work colleagues felt that authentic empathy in the foundation was wanting and this, they believed,

---

<sup>8</sup>In the Indonesian language, 'c'-s are pronounced similar to our 'ch'-es. Thus Cicadas is read something like 'Chee-cha-das'.



weakened the efforts of all involved. These folk were clearly disgruntled and they informed us that the reason they came to us was due to our being different—‘after all,’ they said, ‘look where you live!’ With varying levels of success, we were able to bring a variety of these grievances to the attention of a wider audience in the foundation by acting as somewhat of a broker between the two groups. But the more relevant point in all of this is the fact that such a sensitive topic was even broached by our co-workers at all; this seemed a clear validation that the emptying, partnering incarnational approach we were attempting was on the mark.

\*\*\*

In 1997, prompted by the needs of my doctoral research, my wife, my daughter and myself relocated to Tasikmalaya. It wasn’t long before I became acquainted with Pak Tampan—in fact, during our first month in the city—and not long after that he broached the possibility of centring my work on his home region known as Karang Resik. ‘These people are different’ he told me. ‘They have a unique history of contention, discord and struggle and the Middle Region section of the population have suffered quite a bit because of it. Oddly enough, though, these people still pride themselves on having their own way of life and jealously guarding their own perspective. I can introduce you to many of these folk and I am sure that, with my help, they will open up to you. Personally, I think it would make an interesting study.’ I followed him there the next day and I quickly found that he was right.

It didn’t take long to notice subtle acts of insurrection aimed at what I now label the pembangunan project; in fact, these seemed a daily way of life for Middle Region residents, a point first brought to my attention by the activity I first took part

in—listening to the BBC World Service on short-wave radio. Participants in this seemingly innocuous activity explained their motivation in this way:

We do it for our consumption only. When people tell us about an incident reported on TVRI,<sup>9</sup> we simply smile. We already know the true details—we don't need to let anyone know *how* we know.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, it seemed to me even at this early stage that this activity constituted their own private rebellion. Furthermore, they seemed aware that it centred on covertly gaining access to knowledge and insight which others would scarcely believe they possessed. After all, were they not only simple farmers and cigarette peddlers? With this in mind, they stressed that others should not be aware of their activities at all and, thus, their gatherings persisted as a cherished activity—something to which outsiders were not invited randomly or carelessly. The gathering functioned as almost a private meeting or secret-society assembly, one which served to demarcate those who were 'in' from those who were 'out'. At times when I was present they would see to it that the radio's volume was kept low and that the door remained closed; moreover, they would quickly become very quiet if sounds were heard outside which indicated that someone might be approaching the house. But, continue to listen they did. They almost seemed to relish the clandestine aura of it all.

After several weeks of simply listening to the radio with these men and casually talking, Pak Tampan and I decided it was time to overtly broach the topic of undertaking active research in the area. Having now made my way more toward the

---

<sup>9</sup>*Televisi Republik Indonesia* or, TVRI as it is abbreviated, is the national Indonesian television station which has traditionally served as a mouthpiece for the national government.

<sup>10</sup>*'Ini untuk konsumsi sendiri. Kalau orang kasih tahu tentang peristiwa yang muncul di TVRI, kita senyum aja. Sudah tahu kejadian sebenarnya, orang nggak harus tahu bagaimana.'*



inside of their ranks, the suggestion seemed to carry little risk seeing as how they obviously wished to know the actual history of how their region came to be as it was. Pak Tampan speculated beforehand that they might even actively help me carry out the study, since this would allow them to better satisfy their own curiosity and thirst for information.

He was right. All four men were immediately eager to get involved, though they quickly made it clear that they felt largely out of their element. 'We are not researchers' they said. 'We know nothing about doing surveys. We have no education and we are only little people,' they said. They genuinely seemed not to see the connection between what they were already doing and undertaking research in the region. Thus, I attempted to bridge the conceptual gap for them. I brought it to their attention that they were already doing research in many ways—by listening to the radio, by regularly discussing local events and the impact these had upon village life and their own futures. I told them that what I had in mind was not very different from this. I proposed that we take a very simple approach to gathering and handling local information, facts, data and history by finding older persons in the region who possessed a keen memory and a good analytical ability and inviting these persons to talk. With this, I said, we could attempt to compile a local dictionary and a local history book. Such conversations, I told them, were sure to yield new information and simply jotting down words which were used in interesting ways and recording recollections of occurrences in the area which described how things got to where they were today would give us tremendous insight into much about the area. After some discussion of the matter they seemed willing though not entirely convinced. We agreed to meet in a week's time in order to compare efforts and experiences.

One week later Pak Cece, Pak Ujang, Pak Agus, Pak Tampan and myself gathered once more in order to present the first round of findings. The atmosphere was almost electric—these men were clearly excited about the discoveries they had made, at the historical findings they were able to uncover and at the realisation that their sub-group of the village had its own style of speech and its own terms for local phenomenon and events. The picture of the causes of their region's divisions, partitioning and conflicts which they and their family members had experienced over the past fifty years was already becoming clearer. In short, things pertaining to research and the gathering and processing of local information and history were beginning to make much more sense to them.

After that night, the entire procedure evolved into a division of labour of sorts. Pak Tampan would generally record the findings by meeting with the other men several times during the week in order to reduce their scribbled notes into a legible text. Pak Agus and Pak Cece would visit older residents and casually interview them. And since Pak Ujang spent his days farming rice in the vicinity of the large recreation facility, he was charged with looking for opportunities to speak with individuals associated with that place, since the structure had for several years been the hub of much of the financial activity in the region. The men decided that my job as an 'official' researcher—aligned with the Indonesian Institute of Sciences—was to visit persons considered intimidating (like Pak Uus), keeping an eye on these individuals and finding out what they were willing to say pertaining to incidents and past events in the region. Of course, we all regularly reported back to the wider group at our evening meeting during the week. Ironically, the radio was subsequently seldom listened to during these gatherings—my colleagues seemed to



see our activities as a suitable substitute to the activity. We excitedly carried on in this fashion over the course of the next two years, the mood being typified by a statement made one evening by Pak Agus: 'This is something I am doing for myself. I want my children do know what really happened here', he confessed. Much of the results concerning Karang Resik described above in Chapter Two are the product of the process just described.<sup>11</sup>

A key point in all of this may now be explored. To the uninitiated, the above process might not seem entirely relevant to an appraisal of economic development efforts, let alone to an examination of an incarnational approach to participatory development practice—after all, were we not at the time simply carrying out research, merely gathering information and discussing findings? Does this truly constitute, in any manner, participatory development practice?

In answering these questions, it is important to keep in mind a common critique in much of the literature on grassroots partnering and empowerment concerning the extractive nature of the common social science research process. As Scott (1998), Korten (1980), Chambers (1983 and 1997b), Rahman and Fals-Borda (1991) and Freire (1989 [1970]) have gone to great lengths to point out, entering a region looking for answers without first sounding out the nature of locally-discovered questions is a sure recipe in the end for subjugation, oppression and silencing of local tradition-based populations. The aura of academic credentials and professionalisation quickly intimidates local persons and domesticates them into a priori categories (this was clearly behind the statement made by my friends from

---

<sup>11</sup>Due to the economic crisis in 1997-1998 and the need to more actively scramble for financial sustenance for their families, these residents had to give up this activity toward the end of 1998.

Karang Resik concerning their incompetence in the task of research). With this in mind, a call has often gone up for the establishment of genuine partnership with local residents even at the earliest stages of the research design process of economic development interventions—as opposed to waiting until the implementation or evaluation stage. This, in fact, has been a large part of the rationale behind the adoption of many of PRA’s research tools and techniques—ones aimed at allowing local persons to speak for themselves and describe their own world from the earliest points of outside involvement.

Secondly, my own involvement followed a pre-existent activity already native to the Karang Resik region—namely, the quest on the part of certain local residents for accurate information so that they would ‘...know the true details’, as they themselves put it. They were in pursuit of the real story both for their region and for their country and the process I invited them to undertake seemed to assist them in their own quest. I believe this to be why they were so eager to get involved and to carry on in like manner for many months.

Finally, our late-night meeting arrangement served as a primary forum for discussion, argument and idea exchange; it was not an outside ‘researcher’ calling them together as foot soldiers in lock step to my preconceived agenda. Instead, it hinged upon cultivating a forum of conversation together, a discourse and a dialogue—all at a venue most natural for the primary participants involved. What is more, a key aspect to this was my own ability at the time to speak the national language in a rather proficient manner—this being the result of years of previous involvement in other locations similar to Karang Resik. These partners in deliberation frequently commented that I was easy to speak with and they at times



seemed surprised that our conversation at the late-night meetings flowed so easily. Without a doubt, my several years of cultural ‘apprenticeship’ to Kakek, to friends and neighbours in Cicadas and to co-workers in the Bandung-based NGO afforded me an ability to discern subtle signals and signs which no doubt I would have missed only a mere few years before. Consequently, something akin to Habermas’s ‘ideal speech situation’ took shape and these Middle Region residents as well as myself gained much by way of it. In the process they changed and I changed—all prompted by a steady flow of discourse, discussion and new ideas (I will touch upon a few of these changes below).

Yet, all of this did not happen overnight—instead, it was the product of a slow, unrushed drawing into the language, into the culture and into the specific community I was seeking to enter. And the entire process developed in a very unhurried fashion. When I was not in the region during the day interviewing people, I would ride my bicycle in at nights, spend time casually speaking with various other Middle Region residents gathered at the petrol station and then I would finally meander back to Pak Cece’s house for our scheduled get-together. Everyone I met in the process came to see me as the foreigner who lived just up the road, they knew that my focus was upon economic development in and for the region and, thus, they soon became my friends and I became a fixture in the community. While I was clearly still an outsider, I began to take on the posture of a believer.

### *Effects of the Incarnational Approach Upon Persons in Karang Resik*

Beginning in the middle of 1997 and spanning the next six months (just before the fall from power of President Soeharto), the Indonesian unit of

currency—the rupiah—lost over 75% of its value. The impact upon the local poor was acute. Kerosene prices rocketed, rice prices jumped and simply putting food on the table became a struggle for the average kampung resident.

I sat in Pak Cece's house one night in March of 1998, just before a scheduled two month visit I was to make to the US. As I looked round, I felt my outsider status rising indiscreetly to the surface. I was immune to the financial hardships then pressing in on virtually everyone in Indonesia and few people I talked to in those days were shy about highlighting this fact<sup>12</sup>. As the topic of our conversation came to my forthcoming plans for jetting half way round the world, I prayed that this group would not ask me the cost of my flight. The thought kept running through my mind that I could in no way pretend to have a clue what my friends were facing—and they knew it! Nor, in such a situation, could I simply go on doing 'research'. It was obvious that I had to do something; the time had arrived for action on their behalf.

With this in mind, I groped for something to say. 'Pak Ujang,' I asked, 'What do you make of this crisis and its impact upon Karang Resik?' I intentionally directed my question to him as the poorest of the lot. He answered that the teens and the youth in the Middle Region were entirely without hope. 'They now seem more desperate than I have ever seen them before,' he observed. The answer left me with my head bowed in embarrassment and discomfort. How had I helped? How could I help?

---

<sup>12</sup>To make matters worse, it was commonly known that many expatriates in other cities were taking advantage of the disproportionate exchange rate to either buy goods they previously could not have afforded or to stay at posh hotels and eat out at restaurants regularly. While we tried to avoid this sort of behaviour, the fact remained that the choice of a high life was still there for us (we saw little of this sort of conduct ourselves since Tasikmalaya only boasts approximately 15 Western foreigners out of its 300,000 population).



Just then an idea came to me—almost complete and of one piece. Since a key factor of production for wet rice farmers was land ownership, whatever money I could raise over the next two months could be used to purchase land in the region—and at the time a few dollars translated into a heap of rupiah! With that, the non-government organisation with which I was presently involved could purchase the land and thereafter hire Pak Ujang to work it for us (ostensibly in tenancy fashion as he had been doing for his absentee landlord).<sup>13</sup> But instead of splitting the proceeds of harvest at 50% a piece (as was customary with his present employer), the amount he would cede to us would be only 25%—with a 75% take-home cut for himself. The 25% payment could then be allowed to accrue until it reached an amount equal to the original purchase price of ten bata of land, whereupon this ten bata could be signed over to Pak Ujang as the rightful owner. And in this sort of arrangement, we would not be lending him money since he would be buying the land from us in piece-meal fashion based upon the yields of his harvests. This would help to safeguard the relationship we had with him, since it would avoid a debt arrangement which could threaten to complicate our alliance. Finally, the agreement would require very little monitoring since it was to Pak Ujang's benefit to regularly pay the 25%, seeing as how he would then more quickly become a landowner in his own right. During hard times, he could feel free not to pay at all since, seeing as how we were still in possession of the land, the non-government organisation side would not be financially burdened in the least.

---

<sup>13</sup>On the nature of the non-government organisation and the rationale in our work for establishing it in Tasikmalaya, see below on page 264.

Since the plan had popped so readily into my head, I proceeded to tell the men about it, unravelling its facets in great detail. At first, all wanted in on the deal and there was a good deal of wrangling about how much money I would need to raise and who would get what and how they would farm it. But, after we discussed the level of agricultural expertise the arrangement would require, it quickly became apparent to all that the secret to the idea was Pak Ujang's knowledge of wet rice farming. Out of all of them, he alone was able to make things grow when most everyone else failed. Thus, in a show of Middle Region Hakekat camaraderie, loyalty and authentic gotong royong spirit, everyone became almost giddy with glee for Pak Ujang.

Consequently, I went on my trip to the US and was able to raise US\$3000. Upon returning to Indonesia the following August, we were able to translate this sum into thirty million rupiah which meant we could purchase 100 bata of land (at a going price of Rp. 300,000/bata). Pak Ujang began keeping his ears open in the community so that he could find good land available for purchase. And, of course, both keeping the price down *and* procuring good quality land was to his advantage, since each of these factors was key if he was truly going to repay us and become the lawful owner of the property. This meant that he had to move very slowly and very discreetly, gathering hints regarding who might be selling land and what price they might be asking for it. I learnt a great deal from him concerning the way in which one finds out information discreetly, patiently and unobtrusively in a kampung setting. I was several times asked not to attend our weekly meetings for fear that my presence would call attention to foreign involvement in the deal—something guaranteed to drive the price up.



Over the next year and a half, therefore, we were able to enter into three separate deals for land and, due to Pak Ujang's patience and savvy, we acquired 130 bata all contiguous in location. This arrangement has dramatically improved Pak Ujang's situation since he is now his own boss (he no longer farms for his former employer). He has banked close to a million rupiah with us—and since the first twenty bata of land was purchased at Rp. 200,000/bata, this puts him half way to receiving his first transfer of 10 bata of land.

### *Complications and Complexities for the Incarnational Model*

If left by itself, the above looks like a long yet largely unproblematic enterprise. But belonging is not so easily attained. While we were buoyed by the above achievements, even from the beginning we were confronted with difficulties and pain alongside success and accomplishments. In fact, I soon even realised that I was perhaps not as much of a believer in Karang Resik itself as I had at first assumed. But before exploring that point, a more complete picture is needed of some of the tensions my wife and I experienced as a by-product of our earliest attempts at incarnational involvement in local communities in West Java.

Our relationship with Kakek and Kakek initially seemed near-utopian in terms of the positive benefits an incarnational approach to cultural exploration made available to us. We truly bonded with this couple and it was clear that they did with us. But even then we were under no illusion that this would always be the case. In fact, at precisely the time we were developing an attachment to Kakek and Kakek, things were evolving quite differently in relation to their extended family—namely, with their daughter and son-in-law and with the latter's three daughters. Over time

we realised that they viewed us less as potential friends and more as sources of revenue if cleverly exploited.

For example, when we needed to make a purchase during our first six years of living in West Java—whether this might be to rent a house or process a required bit of government paperwork—it seemed that a member of the extended family invariably showed up accompanied by an acquaintance, a merchant, or a ‘friend’, whom we would then be strongly advised to patronise—complete with a not-so-clandestine kick-back to the family member involved. In addition, these same individuals often seemed able to manipulate circumstances to such a degree that we felt constrained to dole out certain items of our personal belongings to them as a necessary validation of our relationship to the family as a whole. All of this resulted in our feeling manipulated, used and undervalued—in stark contrast to how we felt in relation to Kakek and Kakek— and in relation to Asep.

Thus, our attempts at incarnational involvement from the beginning yielded hope-for results in some cases but very painful ones in others—a fact made most acute by our helpless and gullible vulnerability at these early stages. Our proneness to manipulation often coloured how we felt about the entire society and we frequently found ourselves resenting neighbours, acquaintances, and even the Sundanese culture and its people as a whole. This left us very confused and often bad-tempered and it also brought about a general sense of disappointment in ourselves and in our approach. But being committed for the duration, we attempted to weather the storm and carry on.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Perhaps this sort of internal turmoil was at work in Malinowski at the time he scribbled ill-mannered comments relating to local residents in his diary. See Chapter Four above, note 32.



Our experience with Kakek and Kakek's family was not an isolated experience. Similar to our neighbours in Cicadas, we were often without water (except for a thirty minute time-span each day), we too had rats and cockroaches ever-present in our home and we too felt the effects of the bad reputation of the region, since few of our friends external to the area willingly dropped by to this less than desirable place we had chosen to live. Consequently, we were shocked when we realised how envied we still were by most of our neighbours. After all, we returned to visit our family in the United States every two years or so. When something in our home required repair, we simply phoned someone and our problem was quickly set right. And when we both fell ill with typhoid (a not uncommon experience in our little hamlet), instead of being admitted to the worst ward of the local hospital (thus mirroring the experience of our neighbours), we were admitted to its best ward. For many of our friends, visiting us in hospital at the time gave them the first glimpse they had ever had of such a level of attentive care.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore—like before—we were targeted by a select few who wished to take advantage of us for their own ends. In fact, as I mentioned above in my discussion of Asep, our presence in such a place rather seemed to pull out of the woodwork unscrupulous persons aimed at turning a quick profit from our presence. And while there were those from the region who helped us to keep our wits about us—guarding and protecting us and letting us know when things were not as they should be—we once again felt discouraged, disappointed and at times not a little betrayed.

---

<sup>15</sup>And yet, by Western/Northern standards, we found the amenities and facilities desperately lacking.

We were forced to admit that, try as we might to remove the gap, patent distance persisted between ourselves and most of the residents at the centre of our small hamlet's community life. Thus, in many ways we continued as outsiders who could not fully enter into the hamlet's social affairs. The best we could hope for was that certain individuals would permit us into their lives, meeting us half-way by treating us as friends and giving us insight into the mechanics of the population.

This indeed did happen. There were even those from the region who—similar to Asep—chose to receive us at a personal level in spite of suspicions, distrust and a wariness of all things foreign. Such people became special to us during our time there, persons with whom we developed bonds which proved difficult to relinquish at the time of our move to Tasikmalaya. Nonetheless, we learnt to settle for these smaller expressions of affection, waiting until they grew and expanded in increments. Still, they never quite met our expectations and we were often forced to cope with loneliness and disappointment as a part of our daily range of emotions.

\*\*\*

My experience in Karang Resik also brought about a sobered maturation to my expectations. After enjoying initial success by being received by Middle Region residents, it did not take long before I learnt that all would not go precisely as I had hoped.

Firstly, my views on broad-based participation in the region were forced to come to terms with the conceptual and geographical divisions already latent in the region. While the sheer volume of evidence collected convinced me that my findings were essentially valid, I was yet forced to admit that I had got only one side of the story. Not only did those from the NU and Persis regions seem hesitant to confide in



me, they often appeared blatantly suspicious when I attempted to speak with them. It was then that I realised that this was probably a result of my publically prominent comradery with Middle Region residents. It seems that my approach in the region was taken to be decidedly one-sided, skewed in terms of its willingness to fairly appraise and assess. For the sake of accuracy and fairness, I was determined to rectify this—but I found it harder to do than I had anticipated.

Secondly, my place of residence proved to be a factor. While it is true that I lived in the city of Tasikmalaya for the duration of my research, it was also clear that I was disadvantaged in the participatory process by not living within the region of Karang Resik itself. The reason for this incongruity is easily explained. When we as a family moved to the city in 1997, we took up residence in a location completely across the city from Karang Resik, since only later did I become aware of the region as a potential site for research. However, after determining that this would be the place where I would undertake my work, it was very apparent that I was in no position to move my family yet again across the city in order that we might be ideally incarnational. The fact was, we had already rented a house, we had already completed necessary repairs upon it and my children had already enrolled in school. Thus, I was left riding my bicycle into the region each and every time I wished to engage in participatory exploration. And in light of the paradigm I was attempting to test, this seemed less than optimal.

Thirdly, in a region so permeated with religious determinants, the fact that I was not a Muslim became a considerable factor. For instance, conversations and opportunities for exchanges between friends in the region often centred round events at the local mosque or upon religious events. And while I was seldom prohibited

from attending these,<sup>16</sup> my presence as one so foreign to the context and so odd in terms of background inevitably served to distort the level of confidence I was afforded. Moreover, even with my long tenure in the region and my, therefore, considerable exposure to Islamic contexts in the area, the fact remained that I had not been born into its milieu, I was not raised with it, nor was I fully attuned to its many nuances.

And finally, my linguistic inability in the local language, Sundanese, meant that I could not enter into conversations and communal affairs without semiotically calling attention to the fact that I was from the outside—since, each time I was addressed or I joined in, the medium of communication by necessity switched to the Indonesian language. Of course, an incarnational approach would seem to dictate that I learn this language. However, each time I took this up as a task I either found myself distracted, wearied or frustrated. In short, my own personal limitations stood in the way of participating fully within Karang Resik's social life.

Thus, to help overcome these obstacles, I forged a short-term co-operative relationship with a research-based NGO in Bandung who employed two Muslim Sundanese anthropology students as intern researchers for my project in Karang Resik. I reasoned that Sundanese men who moved to the region would, without doubt, overcome the barriers I was facing. Consequently, these two men—under my weekly guidance and direction in meetings outside of Karang Resik—explored the region for four months in order to dig more deeply into the history of the region and the complexity of its character. By renting a small room closer to the NU and Persis

---

<sup>16</sup>Only once was I prohibited from entering a mosque in the region—at that time by the leader of the religious training school An-Nur, on the basis that I was a *kafir* (infidel). At all other times, I was most warmly received.



regions, they attempted to solicit the views of these residents in relation to the tensions and disparity in the area.<sup>17</sup>

But much to our surprise, they too found doors closed to them by the NU and Persis populations. We determined that the entrenchment of the fissures present in the area over the previous five decades were simply too great for us to bridge in such a short time. It seemed that participatory development practice would require, in this case, a coming to terms with the internal discord long sown in the area in order that a reconciliation process could be set in motion. With this an overall process of democratic deliberation and partnership in the region could be fashioned. What we had in mind at the time was not dissimilar to that sought by Robert Chambers in his efforts to establish and maintain trust in the local village by allowing voiceless members of the local population to speak,<sup>18</sup> or by Jürgen Habermas in his call for uncoerced fora of communication where ‘citizens...come together...as a free and open public body to discuss matters of general interest’,<sup>19</sup> or by Gus Dur in his appeal for broad-based mechanisms of consultative democracy and participation in order that political openness and accountability might be fostered.<sup>20</sup>

But when we suggested the idea of a public meeting in order to bring together representatives from each of the three regions—NU, Persis and the Hakekat—Pak Cece, Pak Ujang and Pak Agus responded with resistance. In fact, Pak Agus replied

---

<sup>17</sup>This experience resulted in the publication of a book by Sofwan Samandawai (2001). Its contents parallel some of the findings in Chapter Two above, but that chapter was essentially already written at the time this arrangement was brokered.

<sup>18</sup>See page 145.

<sup>19</sup>See page 172.

<sup>20</sup>See page 198.

flatly, 'Go ahead—but you can count me out. I'll never go along with that sort of gathering; it will never work!'<sup>21</sup> Middle Region residents were entirely unready to face persons from the other regions for fear of the old animosities being used against them

Surely their fear stemmed from a valid concern, since the national as well as the regional political situation was as yet so very unstable. However, my friends from the Hakekat region seemed to see little need for reconciliation or healing even into the future, in spite of the fact that, after what we had discovered, they were now even more aware of the spate of events which had poisoned the water between the various groups in the region over the years. Nor did they see their own need to entertain a version of events and history which might be at significant variance with their own. They were convinced that things had come to pass precisely as they saw them and, thus, scrutinising their own involvement (or that of their ancestors) in light of opposing opinions seemed to them a needless undertaking. They simply did not like their old nemeses and saw no reason that they should overcome animosities.

Thus, I found that even though these four men had—up to this point—seemed quite eager to unearth the true history of their region, they had suddenly thrown up a covert conservative stance before me—one decidedly anti-developmental and adamantly resistant to change. They preferred ensconcing themselves in a story which required little of them in terms of change—but one which also promised little in terms of growth. I found it next to impossible to move the process along beyond what had already been achieved, for the next step necessarily included working to

---

<sup>21</sup>*'Silahkan—tapi, tanpa saya. Nggak bisa ikut dalam yang kaya itu; nggak mungkin berhasil!'*



create broad-based participatory fora where multiple sides of the region's story could be heard and where old wounds could be addressed and new understandings conceived. But Pak Cece, Pak Ujang and Pak Agus resolutely refused to entertain the idea—they deemed the risk and the dishonour simply too great. Since they bore a history of powerlessness in terms of overt political resources, their first concern was by necessity a minimisation of risk, not a maximisation of opportunity. They were retreating into a 'safety first' posture like that described by Scott (1977).<sup>22</sup> And if I pushed the issue, I ran the risk of appearing just like those they had been trying to elude for quite a few years now. They would be left with no other recourse than to go underground for safety yet once again—scurrying for cover so as not to be detected. Only, this time, I would be the one from whom they were seeking refuge.

The choice was theirs and this left me at an impasse—the principles of incarnational participation dictated as much. I could do little else but regroup and attempt to approach the issue from another angle—an alternative communal undertaking which I will describe below. But with this I also became very aware of the limitations of an incarnational approach to participation—it suffers the same restraints as does an individual faced with incorrigible external parties. It must simply appeal and entreat while waiting and hoping for change. Due to its inner logic of divestment and surrender, its prophetic nature is always tempered with a willingness to allow others to make mistakes. It is always confronted with the 'stature of waiting'.

---

<sup>22</sup>For a previous reference to 'safety first', see above in Chapter Two, page 88 and below in this chapter, page 256.

*Changes Wrought in Me by Incarnational Experience in Karang Resik*

I am now much more realistic as to what participatory involvement in tradition-based communities entails. Several changes in my perspective have been the result, shifts which have altered the way I now approach local communities and hamlets in my quest to take on an incarnational posture.

First, I have acquired an ability to anticipate the unscrupulous and the parasitic without shutting the door on the sincere and the neighbourly. This is less of a personal achievement than it is a product of repeated apprenticeship experiences with persons such as Kakek and Kakek, with Asep, with our neighbours in Cicadas or with many others like them. Ultimately, these persons have fostered in me greater insight into who to avoid, who to trust and how to behave in local Sundanese community life. They have also made me aware that one of the results of my manifest foreignness is a tendency to attract opportunists, even when these might be in the minority. This in turn has helped to buttress healthy relationships I enjoy in the region, as it allows me to more readily risk vulnerability based upon a more reliable sense I now have of who to trust. And in the process, those around me seem to sense my increased calm and at-homeness.

Next, I now realise that an incarnationally participatory approach to development encompasses weakness as much as it presents opportunity. It remains true that such a stance offers a great promise in coming alongside local persons in tradition-based communities. And, as we have seen, the degree to which it induces growth and development for the outside practitioner seeking to engage in contexts in which he or she is not native is a substantial benefit indeed. But, it is also true that such an approach stands rather helpless and impotent should local persons become



unpersuaded, inflexible or even stubborn. At times like these, an embrace of weakness is the only recourse—a point we shall explore in more detail below. But, patience and endurance are also called for. Incarnational involvement is not an overnight quick-fix—it takes time.

Due to these experiences—both in Bandung first and later in Karang Resik—my own naïveté is not now nearly as pronounced as it once was. I have been brought face-to-face with my romantic notions of grass-roots empowerment based upon participatory involvement. Similar to Robert Chambers, I romanticised the local, underestimating complications at the local level which can easily render the participatory process bewildering.

As a result, I have greatly altered the way in which I position myself in West Java. It has taken time for me to realise that, by romanticising them, I had actually turned these persons into objects under glass, devoid of the common complexities evinced by all communities on the face of the planet. I had reduced my task of getting involved into a simplistic process of identification. But fortunately, due to firsthand, concrete involvement in the region, I eventually learnt that the challenge is far more complex than this and that it must always take a considerable amount of time, effort and endurance. Trust must always be earned—generally in stages!—in order for relationships to be forged.

And an essential component to this is time. It has taken me years to get to such a place—linked as it is to my own personal development and maturation which was produced by the paradoxical and dialectic mutuality between West Java as a context and myself as an actor in the region. My approach has changed, my perspective has complicated and my involvement has deepened. Such are the

benefits of an incarnationally participatory approach to development practice. But such also is its challenge.

### *A Reappraisal of the Incarnational Approach*

In order to more deeply appraise the incarnational motif in terms of its suitability, we must now revisit each of the six marks identified in Chapter Three. In this way, we will gauge the motif by placing it alongside the example of participatory development practice just examined.<sup>23</sup> By drawing together insights found in the previous chapters, we should be poised to focus not merely upon the development practitioner's sensitivity and effectiveness as an outsider (in part based on that above), but also upon the amount of potential the motif itself exhibits for eliciting responses aligned with the six marks of the incarnation on the part of those residing in local communities like Karang Resik. As we will soon see, this is necessary in the appraisal since, in the process of development participation, both outsider and insider are in the end faced with a need for change.

#### *Narrative Enactment – Chronological Commonality and Strangeness*

My strangeness was palpable as I first entered the neighbourhoods and hamlets of Karang Resik. My cultural ignorance often left me baffled and confused—and at times even offended and disappointed. I spent the better part of my early days simply attempting to fit in, trying to enter into some of the various social collectives which I discovered in the region. One of the prime motivations was the

---

<sup>23</sup>I will focus primarily upon my experience in Karang Resik, since this is the community examined in greatest detail above.



fact that I actually meant to fit into the region, not simply visit. I was coming to the community not as a tourist—cf. Chambers' critique of 'rural development tourism'—but as someone taking up residence in the region. Thus, I *needed* to fit in—as a researcher, yes, but also as a neighbour. This being so, I was forced to adapt and to adjust, with much of effort in the earliest of days being focussed upon aligning my narrative—my very foreign history and horizons of meaning—with those alternative world view components embraced by residents in my newly adopted community. It was this gradually increased ability to align myself which provided increased access to persons from the region over time. And this ability was in no small part the by-product of extended listening to local voices, opinions and stories—something we heard Chambers, Freire and Habermas stress.

Thus, Hakekat residents before long treated me more and more as a believer to their area. Through protracted involvement in their day-to-day world, I was permitted a peek behind the local cultural curtain into a bit of their subterranean private domain—that which they were reticent to show even to others from the region.

This was how I discovered that the symbolic and emblematic reversals highlighted by James Scott were nothing foreign to these residents; as we have seen, they have utilised these devices of resistance and disagreement for years. Specifically, I discovered how much their private rebellion relied upon a concealed exegesis as well as a playing with symbols of their own design, thus reinforcing Clifford Geertz's summons that we undertake cultural exploration by means of symbolic imagery and the interpretive. These residents seemed very aware of the prevailing interpretive terrain extant during the Soeharto years; they privately looked upon state emblems and national tropes with great suspicion, though they were also

well aware that outright resistance to these was an avenue closed off to them. They nevertheless constructed a new domain of hope and self-esteem by forging subterranean interpretive practices—engaging in their own *ijtihād* manoeuvres in order to make sense of their world. Furthermore, I also learnt that Robert Chambers’s oversight in relation to the local—the way he seemed to romanticise it *and* decouple it from fissures extant at a wider level—were not mistakes these folk were likely to make. They seemed well aware that what they had experienced since 1965 was deeply linked both to national factors as well as to those local.

But, I also became aware that there was more to the picture than this. While it was immediately obvious that Karang Resik was not an unalloyed community of harmonious arrangement—seeing as how a part of what attracted me to the region in the first place were its conflicts, tensions and fissures—I was nevertheless surprised to discover that many Hakekat residents were content to leave the deeper archaeology of these difficulties unaddressed. No doubt, a part of their reticence could be attributed to fear of reprisal and the uncertainty that this produced. Theirs was a ‘safety first’ world and they needed to protect what little space they had for survival. But, in the midst of this reality I also discovered that they themselves harboured a good many animosities which they were simply unwilling to put aside. I came to realise that, if Hakekat residents (willingly?) overlooked anything, it was precisely the possibility that they and their ancestors might have played a part in fashioning some of the fissures in the region.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup>Note the kidnapping and apparent murder of Pak Soma as described in Chapter Two. Not once did I ever hear any note of culpability on the part of Hakekat residents concerning this, even though this was surely an extra-legal carrying out of ‘justice’ on the part of the ancestors of Middle Region residents.



Thus, by bringing this to their attention, I gradually found myself transformed into 'a challenge clothed in familiarity', as I called it in Chapter Three. My 'chronological commonality' was slowly transformed into 'strangeness'—I arose a challenge to their version of local reality and this caused them to withdraw from me in an ever-so-subtle fashion. They were unwilling to submit their version of truth to wider scrutiny by engaging in anything approximating a Habermasian 'ideal speech situation'. It was simply too cognitively risky.

These sorts of tensions are part and parcel of the incarnational motif for participatory development practice. As the picture of the incarnation of Jesus exposes the limits of his capabilities as one submitting to the weaknesses of human form, so are the limitations of the participatory approach to development practice brought into stark relief by the incarnational motif. Since it is engaged narratively, it suffers all of the frailties of storied existence. As in the case of narratives, this sort of approach is messy and replete with tensions and unresolved themes. But, so are local communities and so is life.

*Residential Nearness – Proximity and Distance*

Experience-near and experience-distant divisions are at the heart of the subaltern world of Hakekat residents in Karang Resik—they have long kept out those they have wished to exclude and let in those they have wished to embrace—employing language, symbolism, location and in-group interpretation to buttress such divisions. Fortunately, for just a brief time, I was let in. But, as was pointed out just above, much depended upon my approach and the amount of patience I was willing to show. It takes time to become an outsider who belongs.

The internal world of these people would have remained totally concealed to me had I not taken up a participatory approach involving physical proximity. In order to win their trust, it was absolutely necessary for me to ride in on my bicycle and spend a good bit of time simply ‘hanging about’. In addition, there were several times when Pak Ujang, Pak Agus and Pak Cece popped into my home in order to talk with me about a matter they considered important. By getting to know my family and seeing where I lived, they were able to ‘humanise’ me in their minds—I had a family like each of them and I carried responsibilities in other areas of my life similar to them. Borrowing from the constructs developed by Max Gluckman which we looked at in Chapter Four, these men were able to enter into my world in more of a *multiplex* manner than they had before. I was no longer just ‘Lindy the researcher’, I was now also ‘Lindy the family man’ or ‘Lindy the neighbour’. In short, willingness to take up residence in the midst of a poor community meant that I was a part of that community—part of the scenery—even if I remained an outsider. By being residentially near, we take up a trajectory—a posture of travelling—and thereby



increasingly become belongers. Physical proximity gives space for relational proximity.

But, as was emphasised above, my residential proximity was not as ideal as it could have been. Other factors weighed upon my choice of residence apart from those implied simply by this research project. Since I settled upon Karang Resik as the location for my research only after my family and I had already relocated to Tasikmalaya, we were unable to shift house yet one more time. As a result, our relationship to those living in Karang Resik still brooked more physical distance than was optimal. This fact—amongst others—gave rise to another decision we made after living in the Tasikmalaya area for two years: we decided to establish a non-government organisation focussed upon community development, basing much of its practice on the incarnational motif I am describing here. I will return to a more complete explanation of our rationale for this move below.

### *Physical Encountering – Tangibility and Vulnerability*

In Chapter Two we cited David Korten's contrast of two models for development project design: what he labels 'the blueprint approach' and 'the learning process approach'. In the former there is an overwhelming concern for quantification, for prefabricated and atomized planning processes which are placed in the hands of programme design personnel, individuals often at a physical remove from those charged with implementation or yet again those later called upon to evaluate the project's impact. The focus here is largely upon the expert, an ascribed status of mastery centred upon control and command. Provided the proper experts are in charge, all should go well.

In contrast to this blueprint model, the learning process variety emphasises flexibility and adaptation; Korten notes that, of the organisations he surveyed, those exhibiting the best results were those who—instead of adopting the blueprint style described above—admitted and learnt from their mistakes, who designed projects in partnership with local people and who did not divide knowledge acquisition from active involvement on the part of those persons and communities affected.

We also commented upon the similarity this demarcation shares with the difference between the Indonesian terms *pembangunan* and *perkembangan* (both glossed ‘development’ in English). The former is the blueprint term, since it revolves round a subject-object division based upon the metaphor of an (animate) builder and an (inanimate) building. In the latter, by contrast, the allusion is to an organic process like the blossoming of a ‘flower’ (this being the literal translation of the root word ‘*kembang*’).

Amongst the many enlightening sides to this metaphor, the shape which genuine participation should take must not be overlooked: that done humanly and organically. The emphasis is upon encounter and interaction, not upon abstracted plans and pre-concocted programmes. The ‘who’ involved is exceedingly important, not simply the ‘what’ that is being targeted. In this way, product does not take precedence over process and end does not defeat means. In short, there is a concern for tangibly vulnerable physical encountering.

For Middle Region residents of Karang Resik the focus upon the expert—the ascribed status of control, command and mastery—has not been limited to their experience with development programmes nor has it been confined to the political arena. With the currency of the logic of control found in the *gotong royong* image and the way in which this was conjoined with the ‘The Mandatory Decorum of *Acara*’ as well as with newly fashioned constructs of state-funded patronage,



mechanistic subject-object control styles have long been aimed their way. And as this has become increasingly coupled with hierarchically-laced classical propositionalism apparent in much of Islam, a virtual objectification and dehumanisation has often resulted. Habermas would call it a colonisation of their life-world by means of instrumental reason and a triumph of means over ends. This must be especially disheartening for these folk since the mystical variety of religiosity that they have embraced over the years has been so cabalistically imbued—something for which they have long been vilified by other residents of the region.

And this sort of a climate is not unusual in development work undertaken in tradition-based communities. This is why, in exploring possibilities for development participation and programme design, personal, bodily involvement is ever so crucial on the part of the outside practitioner. In spite of my own inconclusive experience in Karang Resik—where I underwent the embrace of being let into an exclusive group, but where I also was partially shut out of this same group once I took on the more awkward stance of prophetic challenge—that which tempered reactions on all sides seemed to be my physical presence in the region for a period of over four years.

### *Social Embedment – Accountability and Reconciliation*

As was noted in Chapter Two, one of the most striking aspects evinced by Middle Region residents is their loyalty to each other. They have rebelled against the re-configuration of patronage and pembangunan images by consistently remaining true to one another. As was commented upon, this is not unrelated to their own religious viewpoint; since they sanction authentic religious piety as that encompassed by tangible assistance to others in the Karang Resik community—a posture they take as faithfully communicated by the word Hakekat, which means ‘essence’ or

‘essential quality’. To assist others in need is both the Hakekat (‘essential quality’) of all true religion as well as the proof of its existence.

Individualistic participatory approaches which eschew social embedment will produce little in the way of real impact in such a climate. Being embedded in an accountable manner is part and parcel of how these residents envision religious devotion. Nor does such social cohesion appear to be unique to this community. As has already been underscored in previous chapters, communal identity and multiplex statuses are more the norm than the exception in tradition-based societies—though it must be admitted that this is diminishing as effects of industrialisation and modernity achieve more and more of a global reach.

Even so, we have also seen that this loyalty manifested very much an inside/outside flavour to it. Whether due to past experiences, to familial and societal enculturation or to the continuance of present-day inequities, Hakekat residents as a rule mentally exclude NU and Persis adherents from their own fold. Such conflicting ‘us vs. them’ polarisations cannot be ignored by participatory development practices based upon the incarnational motif. Reconciliation between such factions are seen as an unavoidable part of how the development process should unfold. This is not to say that such attempts can be glibly undertaken. On the contrary, suspicions run deep in the region, prompted by acrimonious occurrences remaining in the memories of many of the residents. These will need to be wrestled with as belligerent parties are brought together. But brought together they must be—if anything deserving of the term development is to occur in the region.

Insider/outsider boundaries must be taken into consideration in relation to our status as outsiders. In some ways such an identity poises us as natural catalysts for initiating this sort of change; yet in other ways, it also places us at a distinct disadvantage. As outsiders who have travelled in from a different frame of



reference, we can assist local residents who are ensconced in their own realities so that they can entertain alternative possibilities. Yet it is equally true that outsiders—not as deeply enmeshed in the local context—can easily get it wrong. Moreover, even in the event that we do get it right sometimes, gaining a hearing for prophetic calls for change can become a very difficult task indeed.

One of the most effective means for bringing about shifts in position toward attitudes of appeasement and conciliation is by way of a catalysing group comprised of diverse individuals with different perspectives who then take root in the midst of a local community. Something to this effect is the goal of PRA's focus on triangulation since, in this way, an attempt at intentional pluralisation of participants and interventions adds variety to perspectives on the part of the group, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of its activities.<sup>25</sup> It does this not only by more adequately reflecting a wide range of constituents from the local community (thus helping to fulfill the accountability facet of social embedment), but it also adds import to appeals for change prophetic in nature should these need to be issued (thus also assisting the reconciliation facet).

However, as we have seen, PRA suffers from a lack of social embedment due to (a) the abbreviated nature of its activities, which do not adequately address the chronological commonality component of the first mark of the incarnational motif, and (2) its romanticisation of the local, leaving it little concerned for the sometimes prophetic nature of the development task (e.g., in the form of an invitation to local persons to 'travel' toward reconciliation, reform and change) since it does not adequately take into account the 'strangeness' facet of the first mark or the 'challenge' facet of the last (to which we will return to below).

---

<sup>25</sup>For a review of the concept of triangulation, see page 144ff in Chapter Four.

My own involvement in Karang Resik was more or less solitary—I entered the region alone and my participation was limited by not actually residing within the region. I attempted to initiate something more or less by myself, sharing the ideas and thoughts I had with my friends Pak Cece, Pak Agus, Pak Ujang and Pak Tampan. Such an individualistic approach meant that I was disadvantaged from the beginning. I believe this was at the source of my difficulty in attempting to call them to change more prophetic in nature—how could my friends be sure that this was not just a half-baked idea on the part of an outsider who did not fully know what he was saying? Consequently, over time I decided to change tactics and focus on establishing an assisting community from which I could regroup and re-enter Karang Resik: in league with several colleagues from the region, I began a non-government organisation. Besides that already touched upon, a couple of other considerations were behind this decision.

Firstly, as was pointed out in Chapter Three, faithfulness to the incarnational motif implies a mirroring of God's cause in the form of communal sacraments of the Kingdom established in concrete places. In this way, Jesus can be made locally immanent in the present tense, since such a community can develop into his body in a given place. Through such a mystical union with his person, this community of peace, justice and love can serve as an 'approximation and anticipation' of God's kingdom reign, thereby announcing that God has begun to re-establish his complete rule over history. And while a non-government organisation is not a church and thus it cannot biblically serve as a sacrament of the Kingdom, I still believe it can in part carry out the three sacramental kingdom functions of God's community gathered highlighted above: (1) through its work for peace and social justice, the NGO can be a channel of God's truth and reconciliation, (2) it can provide existential experiences of harmony, peace and love and thereby signal that God is present and at work in the



community and (3) it can offer meaning, purpose and direction to persons associated with its work by way of a renewed story of meaning and destiny for those who choose to adopt the kingdom narrative as their own. As we heard Brueggemann stress in Chapter Three, from the beginning the children of Israel were called to be ‘...a new social community to match the vision of *God's freedom*’.<sup>26</sup> An NGO established upon the logic of the incarnational motif—which embraces the six marks as described here—will surely be called into the same vocation.

Secondly, there needed to be a community which embraced these six marks of the incarnation from the very beginning, so that the incarnational model for development participation could be developed communally—and thus more faithfully—in the Tasikmalaya region. With this, the dialectics found in the marks—the call to tangibility and vulnerability, accountability and reconciliation, access and preference, etc.—would not be imported into the area by a sole individual; on the contrary, they would become the ethic around which the entire community functioned. This would obviously need to be done outside of the confines of Karang Resik (and in my case, it needed to encompass where I was living at the time), but thereafter the idea was to collectively but slowly re-enter the region in order to begin incarnational involvement once again.

Thus, our work is not finished in Karang Resik (and we remain organisationally linked to the area through land purchased which is presently being farmed by Pak Ujang). We hope that social embedment of a more collective nature can be effected in the future. Furthermore, what we have learnt can serve us at the time we re-enter. As patronage alignments continue to shift in the region and in the nation, there could be potential to leverage off of the ethic of loyalty Middle Region residents have long safeguarded—perhaps it could be catalysed into wide-spread

---

<sup>26</sup>Pages 131-132.

positive and authentic forms of gotong royong, as long as a model worthy of emulation could be identified. The model we are thinking of in this case is that of the incarnation—but, evinced communally rather than individually.

*Flexible Availability – Access and Preference*

From the beginning of my involvement in Karang Resik, I attempted to remain flexible. This is why I would peddle my bicycle in at nights and store it at the local petrol station, this is why I allocated time for casually speaking with other Middle Region residents at the station—squatting next to them in Indonesian fashion often for close to an hour, simply speaking of whatever came to mind. This is also why I would meet with my four friends at Pak Cece’s house into the wee hours of the morning at least once but often twice a week. As I stated above, this turned me into a believer of sorts—I became part of the scenery. However, in the same way and for the same reasons that my social embedment was limited, my flexibility was also hampered. I did not live directly in the region nor was I there every evening. Furthermore, while my home was located less than one kilometre from the Karang Resik area, it still took a good bit of effort for residents from the community to pop in on me. While my capacity to respond and adapt was probably better than my friends were accustomed to on the part of other outsiders, it still was not ideal. I have been learning in the area and will continue to do so. But, with the incarnational motif as guide, I feel as if I at least know where I am headed.

But, I also need to comment upon the other component to this mark. I have gone to some length in this chapter to point out the surprising reticence I discovered on the part of Hakekat residents when I proposed that they work through their problems with those from the NU and the Persis regions. In response, they quickly backed away from any suggestion of a community forum in which discussion would



be undertaken in order to bring about consensus concerning contentious points in the area's history. In fact, they subtly even seemed to back away from me.

But, in highlighting this I do not mean to imply that responsibility for reconciliation and making amends in relation to bitter conflicts in the region is equal for all residents in Karang Resik. Clearly Middle Region residents have been the ones who have suffered most over the years—they have been the ones with the least power since they have been the ones who have most felt the repercussions of the reconfigured patronage system during the Soeharto era. Persons from the other divisions in the region patently took advantage of this disequity. This being the case, the incarnational motif calls for a taking sides, with advocacy being offered to Hakekat residents in their quest to redress injustice. Fairness is a part of the incarnation's lexicon, but it must be stressed that neutrality is not. A worthy judge who does not side with a party unfairly persecuted is in the end no judge at all. Thus, as we re-enter the region by means of NGO involvement in the future, we will seek to tend to the needs of those most dispossessed in the region. By what we have seen above, these undoubtedly will be Karang Resik's Hakekat residents. In faithfulness to the incarnational motif, fairness will be a goal of our participatory involvement; this will dictate a preferential ear being given to grievances on the part of Middle Region residents.

### *Verifiable Emptiness – Authenticity and Challenge*

In order to counter subject-object divisions pervasive in communities of privation, Paulo Freire advocates a process of conscientization, by which he means the engendering of a new awareness on the part of all parties of our common humanity—of common vulnerability tangibly encountered. Such an awareness is brought about by new living metaphors which call forth new possibilities for

participants resulting in new conceptions of the other. There is authenticity in these alternatives being placed squarely before another's eyes, so that the option for service is placed before them, both encouraging as well as challenging.

With all of my own weakness, impatience and vulnerability on full public display, I attempted to be a living metaphor of an alternative variety to my friends in Karang Resik. Since I repeatedly showed up physically in their midst, Hakekat members in the region witnessed my own resolve to take up the complexities of life as found in their world. I too—though from the outside—was at least in part willing to live with the uncertainty and opaqueness of the symbols and symbolising activity which they had faced for decades. It seemed to help immensely that I took it upon myself to engage with them in their search for meaning in an incorporated openness as a neighbour. And with this, of course, came an openness to risk and vulnerability—not merely of the bodily variety, but also in terms of how this exposed me to the multifarious interpretations and speech which was formulated by others with whom we all were forced to interface. And ironically in the end, such an interfacing included my challenge to these men themselves.

And it was during this stage when we differed in opinion that divestment was most difficult for me. I felt I knew what was needed—after all, did not an expert such as Habermas appeal for the inauguration of fora of uncoerced discourse in situations such as this so that the 'public sphere' might be opened up to emancipatory-cognitive interests, thus freeing the silenced from systematic control and distortion effected by misappropriated empirical-analytic interests which had left them treated as tools in the national patronage system? But in the end, I knew that this needed to be their decision; I was left with little to do since the emptying ethic of incarnational participation prescribed that I make great effort to leave the decision to them. I was forced to submit to a 'posture of waiting', still appealing to these four men as friends,



but trusting that they had the right to dictate their own destinies in the matter. In my status as an outsider and an 'expert', I possibly could have forced the issue a good deal. However, as I pondered the incarnational image of emptying, I knew that I needed to surrender to pembangunan logic when it would have been easy to assert my 'right' to perkembangan procedures.<sup>27</sup> Due to this inner logic of divestment, it was important for me to allow others to make mistakes—with the only recourse being an offered alternative example in my willingness to wait and submit.

As can be seen, the challenge embraced by this sort of emptying is less about words and more about actions and posture. As one enters into communities such as Karang Resik, words are not that which will speak the loudest—even though, with our university degrees and published papers, these are the tools of our trade. What will speak the loudest is how we live our lives, how we pass by rightful prerogatives which offer little in assisting those most in need in our regions of work and service.

### *Conclusion*

Clearly approaches to development practice informed by the motif of the incarnation are as complicated as life itself. The reason for this is due to the inner core of its logic: this model takes as its guide an image of a human life lived sacrificially in service to others and it utilises this image as a metaphor for assisting poor communities. While it is true that it is a religiously funded metaphor, this is not an image simply theologically descriptive; it is also strategically prescriptive.<sup>28</sup> Thus, as we are guided by these six marks of strategic involvement, the limits of participation will be exposed (since it shares the same limitations as does all human

---

<sup>27</sup>Ironically, if I had asserted perkembangan procedures in the form of discourse forums and open consultation, I would have been forced to do so in a decidedly pembangunan fashion, since this is not what my friends wanted.

<sup>28</sup>As we heard Bonk point out at the beginning of the chapter.

activity) while new possibilities are sure to be uncovered in terms of what participation might actually mean (since, one of the primary characteristics of a metaphor is its ability to conjure up possibility).

But a few words are in order in rounding out this analysis.

Firstly, there is a disconnect in the image in as much as Jesus was a first-century Jewish man, born in a first-century Jewish society to first-century Jewish parents. Thus, borrowing language from historical theology and using it in a rather odd way, we might say that he was not simply like his neighbours in a *homoiousion* manner (of like but not similar substance), but he was identical to them in a *homoousion* manner (he was of the same substance). This is not something we can generally say about ourselves. While this in no way disqualifies the image of the incarnation as a guiding motif for development practice (as can surely be seen by way of the examination above), it does prescribe limitations concerning how far it may be pushed. In keeping with its nature as metaphor, we need to look for possibilities opened up by its appearance, not for wooden formulas to be followed.

Secondly, complications addressed by this image come in two varieties: those of a personal sort and those more structural in nature. Since the metaphor concerns the picture of a person in society, I believe it addresses both of these areas quite well. However, it does so in two separate ways: (a) by virtue of a prophetic, dialectic nature, it challenges oppressive systems like the reconfigured patronage system we looked at above; but (b) it also challenges local persons to incorporate the six marks into their own lives and take on lives which are narratively enacted, residentially near, physically encountered, socially embedded, flexibly available and verifiably emptied themselves. In fact, one of the primary values of this image is the fact that it finds its greatest success when those in communities of privation cease being 'those helped' and instead, in the end, arise as 'those who are helping'. Thus, it challenges



both oppression and the personal characteristics of narcissism and self-importance at the same time.

Finally, it was stated in Chapter One that the adoption of the model presented here in no way hinges upon the religious belief system of the one choosing to follow its lead. A secularist, a Buddhist, a Muslim or an agnostic could just as easily gain insight from this word-picture as could a Christian. That remains true. It is hoped that the metaphor—as metaphor—will inspire new thinking and fresh creativity as we attempt more authentic efforts at participatory development praxis. Nevertheless, this motif—being birthed in a context of religious promulgation—is not detached in terms of its call for change. It suggests an image of good and it is unashamed to exhort others to follow this image.

One of the reasons for this is its narrative nature. As Thiselton says, there is an ‘...interactive relation between narrative description of states of affairs and a “preaching addressed to” hearers and readers as “performative statements.”’ There are statements which

proclaim faith rather than state it...language is not [a] neutral instrument.’...Early Christian confessions are neither purely expressions of personal stance nor purely descriptive statements, but they portray states of affairs to which the speaker stakes his or her personal signature. In the language of Wittgenstein and of High, the speaker “stands behind” the words giving *a pledge and personal backing* that he or she is prepared to undertake commitments and responsibilities that are entailed in extra-linguistic terms by the proposition which is asserted. This is part of what “believing reading” of biblical texts entails for the Christian community (Thiselton 1992:616-617).

This is similar to what Newbigin (1989) describes as beliefs put forward openly with ‘universal intent’. Thus, no matter how neutrally the above has been put forward, there will remain some remnant of exhortation to certain levels of

commitments and responsibilities in it. Not only does this constitute 'believing reading', it is also constitutes 'believing living'.



## Bibliography

- Abdurrahman Wahid  
1987 'The Nadlatul Ulama and Islam in Present Day Indonesia.' In *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*. Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique, editors. Pp. 175-186. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies.
- Ajip Rosidi  
1984 'Ciri-ciri Manusia dan Kebudayaan Sunda' ('Distinctive Characteristics of Sundanese People and Culture'.) In *Masyarakat Sunda dan Kebudayaannya (The Sundanese Community and its Culture)*. in Edi S. Ekadjati, editor. Pp. 125-161. Jakarta: PT Girimukti Pasaka.  
1985 *Manusia Sunda Sebuah Esai tentang Tokoh-tokoh Sastra dan Sejarah (The Sundanese Person An Essay Dealing with Literary Figures and History)*. Jakarta: Inti Idayu Press.
- Aleksius Jemadu  
1997 'Indonesia's Nation-building Process at a Crossroad.' *Jakarta Post* 3 March:5.
- Alinsky, Saul D.  
1989 [1946] *Reveille for Radicals*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Anderson, Benedict R. O'G.  
1990 *Language and Power Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.  
1991 *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New Edition. New York: Verso.
- Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. and Ruth McVey  
1971 *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project.
- Anek Laothamatas  
1992 *Business Associations and the New Political Economy of Thailand: From Bureaucratic Polity to Liberal Corporatism*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Antlöv, Hans  
1994 'Village Leaders and the New Order.' In *Leadership on Java Gentle Hints, Authoritarian Rule*. Hans Antlöv and Sven Cederroth, editors. Pp. 73-96. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, Ltd.
- Arce, Alberto and Norman Long  
2000 *Anthropology, Development and Modernities*. London: Routledge.

- Ariel Heryanto  
1988 'The Development of "Development".' Nancy Lutz, translator. *Indonesia* 46:1-24.  
1996 'Pembakuan Bahasa dan Totalitarianisme' ('The Standardisation of Language and Totalitarianism.') In *Bahasa dan Kekuasaan Politik Wacana di Panggung Orde Baru (Language and Power Political Discourse on the New Order Stage)*. Yudi Latif and Idi Subandy Ibrahim, editors. Pp. 252-261. Bandung, Indonesia: Penerbit Mizan.
- Arkoun, Mohamed  
1994 *Rethinking Islam Common Questions, Uncommon Answers*. Robert D. Lee, translator. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.  
1998 'Rethinking Islam Today.' In *Liberal Islam A Source Book*. Charles Kurzman, editor. Pp. 205-221. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Arndt, H. W.  
1981 'Economic Development: A Semantic History.' *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 29(3):457-466.
- Augsburger, David  
1996 *Helping People Forgive*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Aunger, Robert  
1995 'On Ethnography: Storytelling or Science?' *Current Anthropology* 36(1):97-130.
- Austin, J. L.  
1962 *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Baillie, D. M.  
1948 *God Was in Christ An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement*. London: Faber and Faber Limited.
- Barth, Karl  
1975 *Church Dogmatics*. Volume I. *The Doctrine of the Word of God (Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics)*. Part 1. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.
- Bauman, Zygmunt  
1991 *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.  
1997 *Postmodernity and its Discontents*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Benhabib, Seyla  
1986 *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.  
1992 *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*. New York: Routledge.



- Berger, Peter L.  
1974 *Pyramids of Sacrifice Political Ethics and Social Change.* New York: Penguin Books.  
1979 *The Heretical Imperative Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation.* London: Collins.
- Berger, Peter, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner  
1973 *The Homeless Mind Modernization and Consciousness.* New York: Vintage Books.
- Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann  
1966 *The Social Construction of Reality.* New York: Anchor Books.
- Bevans, Stephen B.  
1992 *Models of Contextual Theology.* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- Blaug, Ricardo  
1995 'Distortion of the Face to Face: Communicative Reason and Social Work Practice.' *British Journal of Social Work* 25:423-439.  
1999 *Democracy Real and Ideal Discourse Ethics and Radical Politics.* Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Bonk, Jonathan  
1991 *Missions and Money Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem.* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- Bosch, David J.  
1991 *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission.* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- Brewster, E. Thomas and Elizabeth S.  
1976 *Language Acquisition Made Practical (LAMP).* Pasadena, California: Lingua House.  
1982 *Bonding and the Missionary Task.* Pasadena, California: Lingua House.  
1984 *Language Learning IS Communication—IS Ministry.* Pasadena, California: Lingua House.
- Bright, John  
1953 *The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church.* Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press.
- Browning, Don S. and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, editors  
1992 *Habermas, Modernity and Public Theology.* New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Brueggemann, Walter  
1982 *Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education.* Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Press.  
1989 *Finally Comes the Poet Daring Speech for Proclamation.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.  
2001 *The Prophetic Imagination.* Second Edition. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

- Brunner, Emil  
1952 *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics*. Vol. II. Olive Wyon, translator. London: Lutterworth Press.
- Brydon, Lynne and Sylvia Chant  
1989 *Women in the Third World Gender Issues in Rural and Urban Areas*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Budi Hardiman, F.  
1993 *Menuju Masyarakat Komunikatif Ilmu, Masyarakat, Politik & Postmodernisme Menurut Jürgen Habermas (Towards a Communicative Community Science, Community, Politics & Postmodernism according to Jürgen Habermas)*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Budi Rahayu Tamsyah  
1996 *Kamus Lengkap Sunda-Indonesia Indonesia-Sunda Sunda-Sunda (Unabridged Dictionary Sunda-Indonesia Indonesia Sunda Sunda-Sunda)*. Bandung: Pustaka Setia.
- Bunch, Roland  
1982 *Two Ears of Corn A Guide to People-centered Agricultural Improvement*. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: World Neighbors.
- Burgess, Anthony  
1975 *Language Made Plain*. Second Version. London: Fontana Paperbacks.
- Chambers, Robert  
1983 *Rural Development Putting the Last First*. Essex, England: Addison Wesley Longman Limited.  
1994a 'The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal.' *World Development* 22(7):953-969.  
1994b 'Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Analysis of Experience.' *World Development* 22(9):1253-1268.  
1994c 'Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Challenges, Potentials and Paradigm.' *World Development* 22(10):1437-1454.  
1997a 'Editorial: Responsible Well-Being—A Personal Agenda for Development.' *World Development* 25(11):1743-1754.  
1997b *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Chomsky, Noam  
1957 *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Clark, Margaret, Robert V. Kemper and Cynthia Nelson, editors  
1979 *From Tzintzuntzan to 'The Image of Limited Good': Essays in Honor of George M. Foster*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Clifford, James  
1983 'On Ethnographic Authority.' *Representations* 0(2):118-146.
- Cooke, Bill and Uma Kothari, editors  
2001a *Participation: The New Tyranny?* London and New York: Zed Books.



- Cooke, Bill and Uma Kothari  
2001b 'The Case for Participation as Tyranny.' In *Participation: The New Tyranny?* Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, editors. Pp. 1-15. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Cragg, Kenneth  
1979 'The Art of Theology: Islamic and Christian Reflections.' In *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge*. Alford T. Welch and Pierre Cachia, editors. Pp. 276-295. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.  
1985 *The Call of the Minaret*. Second Edition. London: Collins Liturgical Publications.
- Crane, Julia G. and Michael V. Angrosino  
1984 *Field Projects in Anthropology A Student Handbook*. Second Edition. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Crick, Malcolm  
1982 'Anthropological Field Research, Meaning Creation and Knowledge Construction.' In *Semantic Anthropology*. David Parkin, editor. Pp. 15-37. London: Academic Press.
- Dallmayr, Fred. R.  
1976 'Beyond Dogma and Despair: Toward a Critical Theory of Politics.' *The American Political Science Review* 70(1):64-79.
- Daly, Herman E. and John B. Cobb, Jr.  
1994 *For the Common Good Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future*. Second Edition. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Davis, Charles  
1978 *Theology and Political Society The Hulsean Lectures in the University of Cambridge*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Dawe, Donald G.  
1963 *The Form of a Servant A Historical Analysis of the Kenotic Motif*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- Denny, Frederick Mathewson  
1994 *An Introduction to Islam*. Second Edition. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Depew, David J.  
1981 'The Habermas-Gadamer Debate in Hegelian Perspective.' *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 8(4):427-446.
- Dulles, Avery  
1988 *Models of the Church A Critical Assessment of the Church in All its Aspects*. Second Edition. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd.

- Eisenstadt, S. N. and Luis Roniger  
1981 'The Study of Patron-client Relations and Recent Developments in Sociological Theory.' In *Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development*. S. N. Eisenstadt and René Lemarchand, editors. Pp. 271-295. London: Sage Publications.
- 1984 *Patrons, Clients and Friends Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Emmerson, Donald K.  
1978 'The Bureaucracy in Political Context: Weakness in Strength.' In *Political Power and Communications in Indonesia*. Karl D. Jackson and Lucian W. Pye, editors. Pp. 82-136. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Esposito, John  
1991 *Islam and Politics*. Third Edition. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Federspiel, Howard M.  
1970 *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth-century Indonesia*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Feener, R. Michael  
1999 *Developments of Muslim Jurisprudence in Twentieth Century Indonesia*. PhD thesis, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts.
- Fiorenza, Francis Schüssler  
1992 'Introduction: A Critical Reception for a Practical Public Theology.' In *Habermas, Modernity and Public Theology*. Don S. Browning and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, editors. Pp. 1-18. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Forrester, Duncan B.  
1997 *Christian Justice and Public Policy*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Forsyth, Peter Taylor  
1909 *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ: The Congregational Union Lecture for 1909*. London and Boston, Massachusetts: Congregational Union of England and Wales and Pilgrim Press.
- Foster, George M.  
1965 'Peasant Society and the Images of Limited Good.' *American Anthropologist* 67:293-315.
- 1967 *Tzintzuntzan: Mexican Peasants in a Changing World*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- 1972 'A Second Look at Limited Good.' *Anthropological Quarterly* 45:57-64.



- Francis, Paul  
2001 'Participatory Development at the World Bank: the Primacy of Process.' In *Participation: The New Tyranny?* Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, editors. Pp. 72-87. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Frans Magnis-Suseno  
1992 *Filsafat Sebagai Ilmu Kritis (Philosophy as Critical Science)*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.  
1996 *Etika Jawa Sebuah Analisa Falsafi tentang Kebijaksanaan Hidup Jawa (Javanese Ethics A Philosophical Analysis of Javanese Life Wisdom)*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Freeman, Derek  
1983 *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Freire, Paulo  
1973 *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.  
1985 *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation*. New York: Bergin and Garvey Publishers.  
1989 [1970] *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum Publishing Company.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg  
1975 *Truth and Method*. William Glen-Doepel, translator. London: Sheed and Ward.
- Garrett, Susan R.  
1998 *The Temptations of Jesus in Mark's Gospel*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Geertz, Clifford  
1960 *The Religion of Java*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.  
1973 *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.  
1983 *Local Knowledge Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.
- Gilligan, Carol  
1982 *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Gilliland, Dean S., editor  
1989 *The Word Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today*. Dallas: Word Publishing.
- Glicken, Jessica  
1987 'Sundanese Islam and the Value of Hormat: Control, Obedience, and Social Location in West Java.' In *Indonesian Religions in Transition*. Rita Smith Kipp and Susan Rodgers, editors. Pp. 238-252, 273-274. Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press.

- Gluckman, Max  
1967 *The Judicial Process Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*. Second Edition. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Gooding, David  
1987 *According to Luke A New Exposition of the Third Gospel*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Goulet, Denis  
1989 'Participation in Development: New Avenues.' *World Development* 17(2):165-178.
- Grijns, Mies, Ines Smyth and Anita van Velzen  
1994 'Research Issues.' In *Different Women, Different Work Gender and Industrialisation in Indonesia*. Mies Grijns et al., editors. Pp. 9-15. Aldershot, England: Avebury.
- Guinness, Patrick  
1994 'Local Society and Culture.' In *Indonesia's New Order The Dynamics of Socio-economic Transformation*. Hal Hill, editor. Pp. 267-304. St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd.
- Habermas, Jürgen  
1972 *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Jeremy J. Shapiro, translator. London: Heinemann.
- 1974 *Theory and Practice*. John Viertel, translator. London: Heinemann.
- 1979 *Communication and the Evolution of Society*. Thomas McCarthy, translator. London: Heinemann.
- 1984 *The Theory of Communicative Action Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Volume 1. Thomas McCarthy, translator. London: Heinemann.
- 1987 *The Theory of Communicative Action The Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Volume 2. Thomas McCarthy, translator. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- 1989 *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Thomas Burger, translator, assisted by Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Hailey, John  
2001 'Beyond the Formulaic: Process and Practice in South Asian NGOs.' In *Participation The New Tyranny?*. Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, editors. Pp. 88-101. London: Zed Books.
- Hardjono, Joan  
1981 'Rural Development in Indonesia: The 'Top-down' Approach.' In *Rural Development and the State Contradictions and Dilemmas in Developing Countries*. David A. M. Lea and D. P. Chaudhri, editors. Pp. 38-65. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.



- Harris, Marvin  
1979 *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture.*  
New York: Random House.
- Hart, Trevor and Daniel Thimell, editors  
1989 *Christ in Our Place The Humanity of God in Christ for the  
Reconciliation of the World.* Exeter, Great Britain and Allison  
Park, Pennsylvania: The Paternoster Press and Pickwick  
Publications.
- Hasan Mustapa, R. H.  
1991 *Adat Istiadat Sunda (Sundanese Traditional Customs).*  
Maryati Sastrawijaya, translator. Bandung, Indonesia: Penerbit  
Alumni (originally published in the Sundanese language in  
1913).
- Hauerwas, Stanley  
1983 *The Peaceable Kingdom.* Notre Dame, Indiana: University of  
Notre Dame Press.
- Hebblethwaite, Brian  
1987 *The Incarnation Collected Essays in Christology.*  
Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Hefner, Robert W.  
1987 'Islamizing Java? Religion and Politics in Rural East Java.'  
*Journal of Asian Studies* 46(3):533-554.  
2000 *Civil Islam Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia.*  
Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Heiddeger Martin  
1992 *Being and Time.* John McQuarrie and Edward Robinson,  
translators. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Henkel, Heiko and Roderick Stirrat  
2001 'Participation as Spiritual Duty; Empowerment as Secular  
Subjection.' In *Participation: The New Tyranny?* Bill Cooke  
and Uma Kothari, editors. Pp. 168-184. London and New  
York: Zed Books.
- Hick, John, editor  
1977 *The Myth of God Incarnate.* London: SCM Press Ltd.
- Hobart, Mark  
1993 'Introduction: the Growth of Ignorance?' In *An  
Anthropological Critique of Development.* Mark Hobart,  
editor. Pp. 1-30. London: Routledge.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger, editors  
1987 *The Invention of Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University  
Press.
- Holub, Robert C.  
1991 *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere.* New York:  
Routledge.
- How, Alan  
1995 *The Habermas-Gadamer Debate and the Nature of the Social  
Back to Bedrock.* Aldershot, England: Avebury.

- Hugo, Graeme J., Terence H. Hull, Valerie J. Hull and Gavin W. Jones  
1987 *The Demographic Dimension in Indonesian Development.* Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Illich, Ivan  
1973 *Tools for Conviviality.* London: Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd.  
1976 *Medical Nemesis.* New York: Pantheon.  
1978 *Toward a History of Needs.* New York: Pantheon.  
1983 *Deschooling Society.* New York: Harper and Row.
- Jackson, Karl D.  
1978a 'Bureaucratic Polity: A Theoretical Framework for the Analysis of Power and Communications in Indonesia.' In *Political Power and Communications in Indonesia.* Karl D. Jackson and Lucian W. Pye, editors. Pp. 3-22. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.  
1978b 'Urbanization and the Rise of Patron-client Relations: the Changing Quality of Interpersonal Communications in the Neighborhoods of Bandung and the Villages of West Java.' In *Political Power and Communications in Indonesia.* Karl D. Jackson and Lucian W. Pye, editors. Pp. 343-392. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.  
1980 *Traditional Authority, Islam, and Rebellion A Study of Indonesian Political Behavior.* Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Jakarta Post*  
1991a 'Indonesia Denies Western Reports on Buru Island.' 1 April:1.  
1991b 'Intellectuals Establish Forum to Bolster Democracy in Indonesia.' 4 April:1.  
1998a 'ABRI Should Revise Political Role.' 10 August:1.  
1998b 'Armed Forces Should Quit Politics, Says Observer.' 10 August:2.  
1998c 'Indonesia Needs Free Flow of Information: Lev.' 22 August:1.  
1998d '1965 Coup Film No Longer Obligatory.' 24 August:2.  
1998e 'Calls Mount for ABRI to Review Dual Role Concept.' 17 September:2.  
1998f 'Rewriting History.' 24 September:4.  
1998g 'Return of the Bogeyman.' 26 September:4.
- Kapoor, Ilan  
2001 'Towards Participatory Environmental Management?' *Journal of Environmental Management* 63(3):269-279.  
2002 'The Devil's in the Theory: A Critical Assessment of Robert Chambers' Work on Participatory Development.' *Third World Quarterly* 23(1):101-117.
- Kearney, Michael  
1984 *World View.* Novato, California: Chandler and Sharp Publishers, Inc.



- Koentjaraningrat  
1985 *Javanese Culture*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Kompas*  
1991 'Partisipasi Rakyat dalam Pembangunan Politik Baru Terbatas pada Pemilu' ('Participation of the People in Political Development is Limited Solely to the Ballot Box.') 31 May:1.
- Korten, David  
1980 'Community Organization and Rural Development: A Learning Process Approach.' *Public Administration Review* 40:480-511.  
1990 *Getting to the 21st Century*. West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, Inc.
- Kothari, Uma  
2001 'Power, Knowledge and Social Control in Participatory Development' In *Participation: The New Tyranny?* Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, editors. Pp. 139-152. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Kraybill, Donald B.  
1990 *The Upside-Down Kingdom*. Second Edition. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press.
- Kroeber, A. L. and Clyde Kluckhohn  
1952 *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Ladd, George Eldon  
1966 *Jesus and the Kingdom: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*. London: SPCK.
- Lasch, Christopher  
1991 *The True and Only Heaven Progress and Its Critics*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.  
1995 *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.
- Lemarchand, René  
1981 'Comparative Political Clientelism: Structure, Process and Optic.' In *Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development*. S. N. Eisenstadt and René Lemarchand, editors. Pp. 7-32. London: Sage Publications.
- Lewis, Alan E.  
1989 'Kenosis and Kerygma: The Realism and the Risk of Preaching.' In *Christ in Our Place The Humanity of God in Christ for the Reconciliation of the World*. Trevor Hart and Daniel Thimell, editors. Pp. 70-91. Exeter, Great Britain and Allison Park, Pennsylvania: The Paternoster Press and Pickwick Publications.

- Liddle, William R.  
1978 'Participation and the Political Parties.' In *Political Power and Communications in Indonesia*. Karl D. Jackson and Lucian W. Pye, editors. Pp. 171-195. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Limouris, Gennadios editor  
1986 *Church Kingdom World*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Lindbeck, George A.  
1979 Review of *The Myth of God Incarnate*, by John Hick. *Journal of Religion* 59(2):248-250.  
1984 *The Nature of Doctrine Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. London: SPCK.
- Mackie, Jamie and Andrew MacIntyre  
1994 'Politics.' In *Indonesia's New Order The Dynamics of Socio-economic Transformation*. Hal Hill, editor. Pp. 1-53. St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd.
- Malina, Bruce J.  
2001 *The New Testament World Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. Third Edition. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Marlow, Louise  
1997 *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Manzo, Kate  
1995 'Black Consciousness and the Quest for a Counter-Modernist Development.' In *Power of Development*. Jonathan Crush, editor. Pp. 228-252. London and New York: Routledge.
- Marcus, George and Michael Fischer  
1986 *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Marshall, I. Howard  
1979 *Luke—Historian and Theologian*. Exeter, England: The Paternoster Press.
- Max-Neef, Manfred A.  
1990 'Notes on the Semiology of our Megacrisis.' *Development Journal of the Society for International Development* 3(4):5-6.
- May, Brian  
1978 *The Indonesian Tragedy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Mayoux, Linda  
1995 'Beyond Naivety: Women, Gender Inequality and Participatory Development.' *Development and Change* 26(2):235-258.
- Mehmet, Ozay  
1990 *Islamic Identity and Development Studies of the Islamic Periphery*. London: Routledge, 1990,



- Mohan, Giles  
2001 'Beyond Participation: Strategies for Deeper Empowerment.'  
In *Participation The New Tyranny?*. Bill Cooke and Uma  
Kothari, editors. Pp. 153-167. London: Zed Books.
- Mohan, Giles and Kristian Stokke  
2000 'Participatory Development and Empowerment: the Dangers  
of Localism.' *Third World Quarterly* 21(2):247-268.
- Moltmann, Jürgen  
1974 *The Crucified God The Cross of Christ as the Foundation  
and Criticism of Christian Theology*. London: SCM Press  
Ltd.
- Mosse, David  
1994 'Authority, Gender and Knowledge—Theoretical Reflections  
on the Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal.' *Development  
and Change* 25(3):497-526.
- Mott, Stephen Charles  
1982 *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*. New York: Oxford  
University Press.
- Muhammad A.S. Hakim  
1996 'Bahasa dan Politik: Penghampiran "Discursive Practice"  
(“Language and Politics: A “Discursive Practice” Approach.”)  
In *Bahasa dan Kekuasaan Politik Wacana di Panggung Orde  
Baru (Language and Power Political Discourse on the New  
Order Stage)*. Yudi Latif and Idi Subandy Ibrahim, editors.  
Pp.77-93. Bandung, Indonesia: Penerbit Mizan.
- Mujiburrahman  
1999 'Islam and Politics in Indonesia: the Political Thought of  
Abdurrahman Wahid.' *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*  
10(3):339-352.
- Mulder, Niels  
1987 *Individual and Society in Java A Cultural Analysis*.  
Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Newsweek*  
1998a 'Rebels With a Cause.' 131(20):44-47.  
1998b 'Sifting Through the Ashes of Leadership.' 131(21):18.  
1998c 'After Suharto.' 131(22):16-23.  
1998d 'Always the Best Revenge.' 131(22):22.  
1998e 'A Harebrained Schemer.' 131(22):19.
- Newbigin, Lesslie  
1986 *Foolishness to the Greeks The Gospel and Western Culture*.  
London: SPCK.  
1989 *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids, Michigan:  
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.  
1995 *The Open Secret An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*.  
Revised Edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B.  
Eerdmans Publishing Company.

- Nida, Eugene  
1960 *Message and Mission*. South Pasadena, California: William Carey Library.
- Nurcholish Madjid  
1998 'The Necessity of Renewing Islamic Thought and Reinvigorating Religious Understanding.' In *Liberal Islam A Source Book*. Charles Kurzman, editor. Pp. 284-294. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Opler, Morris E.  
1945 'Themes as Dynamic Forces in Culture.' *American Journal of Sociology* 51:198-206.
- Page, Ruth  
1991 *The Incarnation of Freedom and Love*. London: SCM Press.
- Peters, Tom  
1989 *Thriving on Chaos: Handbook for a Management Revolution*. London: Pan Books.
- Pikiran Rakyat*  
1995 'Tegakkan Disiplin Nasional' ('Establish National Discipline.') 21 May:1.
- Pobee, John S.  
1995 'A Passover of Language An African's Perspective.' In *Mission in Bold Humility David Bosch's Work Considered*. Willem Saayman and Klippies Kritzinger, editors. Pp. 53-58. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press.
- Polanyi, Michael  
1958 *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Postcritical Philosophy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.  
1967 *The Tacit Dimension*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Pramoedya Ananta Toer  
1990 *This Earth of Mankind*. Max Lane, translator. New York: Penguin Books (first published as *Bumi Manusia*. Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1980).  
1996a *Child of All Nations*. Max Lane, translator. New York: Penguin Books (first published as *Anak Semua Bangsa*. Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1980).  
1996b *Footsteps*. Max Lane, translator. New York: Penguin Books (first published as *Jejak Langkah*. Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1985).  
1997 *House of Glass*. Max Lane, translator. New York: Penguin Books (first published as *Rumah Kaca*. Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1988).  
1999 *The Mute's Soliloquy A Memoir*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Pye, Lucian W.  
1985 *Asian Power and Politics the Cultural Dimensions of Authority*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.



- Rahman, Fazlur  
1979 'Islam: Challenges and Opportunities.' In *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge*. Alford T. Welch and Pierre Cachia, editors. Pp. 315-330. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- 1982 *Islam and Modernity Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Rahman, Mohammad Anisur and Orlando Fals-Borda  
1991 'A Self-Review of PAR.' In *Action and Knowledge Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action-Research*. Orlando Fals-Borda and Mohammad Anisur Rahman, editors. Pp. 24-34. New York and London: The Apex Press and Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Ramage, Douglas E.  
1995 *Politics in Indonesia Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ricoeur, Paul  
1971 'The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text.' *Social Research* 38:529-562.
- 1978 *The Rule of Metaphor Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- 1981 *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. New York and Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- 1984-88 *Time and Narrative*. Three Volumes. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, translators. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Riddell, Peter G.  
2001 *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World Transmission and Responses*. London: Hurst and Company.
- Ridderbos, Herman  
1962 *The Coming of the Kingdom*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.
- Riggs, Fred  
1966 *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity*. Honolulu: The East-West Center Press.
- Roderick, Rick  
1986 *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory*. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
- Rodgers, Susan and Richard McGinn  
1985 'Interpretive Approaches to Southeast Asian Language and Cultures—A Symposium Introduction.' *Journal of Asian Studies* 44(4):735-742.
- Ruane, Joseph and Jennifer Todd  
1988 'The Application of Critical Theory.' *Political Studies* 36:533-538.

- Sachedina, Abdulaziz  
2001 *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sachs, Wolfgang, editor  
1992 *The Development Dictionary A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Samson, Allan A.  
1978 'Conceptions of Politics, Power, and Ideology in Contemporary Indonesian Islam.' In *Political Power and Communications in Indonesia*. Karl D. Jackson and Lucian W. Pye, editors. Pp. 196-226. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Sanneh, Lamin  
1984 'Muhammad, Prophet of Islam and Jesus Christ, Image of God: A Personal Testimony' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 8(4):169-174.  
1989 *Translating the Message The Missionary Impact on Culture*. Maryknoll, New York:Orbis Books.
- Sapir, Edward  
1949 *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language Culture and Personality*. D. G. Mandelbaum, editor. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Sbert, José Maria  
1991 'Progress.' In *The Development Dictionary A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. Wolfgang Sachs, editor. Pp. 192-205. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Schacht, J. editor  
1979 *The Legacy of Islam*. Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schumacher, E. F.  
1993 [1973] *Small is Beautiful A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*. London: Vintage Books.
- Schwarz, Adam  
1994 *A Nation in Waiting Indonesia in the 1990s*. St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd.



- Scott, James C.  
1972 'Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia.' *The American Political Science Review* 66(1):91-113.  
1977 *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.  
1985 *Weapons of the Weak Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.  
1990 *Domination and the Arts of Resistance Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.  
1998 *Seeing Like a State How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Searle, John  
1969 *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Setia Permana and Dadi J. Iskandar  
1994 'Ritualisme Politik dan Praktik Demokrasi' ('Political Ritualism and Democratic Practice.') *Pikiran Rakyat* 26 May:4.
- Seymour-Smith, Charlotte  
1986 *Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology*. London: Macmillan Reference Books.
- Shiva, Vandana and Jayanto Bandyopadhyay  
1981 'Participatory Research and Technology Assessment by the People.' In *Participatory Research and Evaluation Experiments in Research as a Process of Liberation*. Walter Fernandes and Rajesh Tandon, editors. Pp. 109-123. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute.
- Shorter, Aylward  
1994 *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- Soeharmono Tjitrosoewarno, H.  
1995 'Rame-rame Mencari Nama "Asli"' ('Frantically Searching for "Original" Names.') *Pikiran Rakyat* 29 May:8.
- Sider, Ronald J.  
1990 *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*. Third Edition. Dallas: Word Publishing.
- Sofwan Samandawai  
2001 *Mikung: Bertahan dalam Himpitan Kajian Masyarakat Marjinal di Tasikmalaya (Mikung: Resistance under Pressure An Analysis of a Marginal Community in Tasikmalaya)*. Bandung: Akatiga.
- Sukarno  
1969 'The Birth of *Pantja Sila*.' In *Man, State and Society in Contemporary Southeast Asia*. Robert O. Tilman, editor. Pp. 270-276. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers.

- Spencer, Jonathan  
1989 'Anthropology as a Kind of Writing.' *Man* 24(1):145-164.
- Spradley, James P.  
1980 *Participant Observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Stackhouse, Max  
1988 *Apologia Contextualization, Globalization, and Mission in Theological Education*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Stern, Joseph Peter  
1984 *Hitler: the Führer and the People*. London: Fontana.
- Sullivan, John  
1987 *Local Government and Community in Java An Urban Case-study*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sundhaussen, Ulf  
1978 'The Military: Structure, Procedures, and Effects on Indonesian Society.' In *Political Power and Communications in Indonesia*. Karl D. Jackson and Lucian W. Pye, editors. Pp. 45-81. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Taufik Abdullah  
1996 'Situasi Kebahasaan Masa Kini: Kepungan Eksternal dalam Perkembangan Bahasa dan Wacana Indonesia' ('Today's Language Situation: The External Siege Found in Language Development and Indonesian Discourse.') In *Bahasa dan Kekuasaan Politik Wacana di Panggung Orde Baru (Language and Power Political Discourse on the New Order Stage)*. Yudi Latif and Idi Subandy Ibrahim, editors. Pp. 345-362. Bandung, Indonesia: Penerbit Mizan.
- Taber, Charles  
1983 'Contextualization.' In *Exploring Church Growth*. Wilbert R. Shenk, editor. Pp. 117-131. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Taylor, John V.  
1973 *The Go-Between God The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission*. London: London.
- Thiselton, Anthony C.  
1992 *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*. London: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Tracy, David  
1992 'Theology, Critical Social Theory, and the Public Realm.' In *Habermas, Modernity and Public Theology*. Don S. Browning and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, editors. Pp. 19-42. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Uhlin, Anders  
1997 *Indonesia and the 'Third Wave of Democratization' The Indonesian Pro-Democracy Movement in a Changing World*. . Surrey, England: Curzon Press.



- Vanstone, W. H.  
1982 *The Stature of Waiting*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.
- Vatikiotis, Michael R. J.  
1990 'Charity Begins at Home.' *Far Eastern Economic Review* 150(40):62-64.  
1993 *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*. New York: Routledge.
- Verhelst, Thierry G.  
1990 *No Life Without Roots Culture and Development*. Bob Cumming, translator. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Ward, Keith  
1994 *Religion and Revelation A Theology of Revelation in the World's Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
2000 *Religion and Community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wessing, Robert  
1978 *Cosmology and Social Behavior in a West Javanese Settlement*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies.
- White, Stephen K.  
1979 'Rationality and the Foundations of Political Philosophy: An Introduction to the Recent Work of Jürgen Habermas.' *The Journal of Politics* 41(4):1156-1171.
- Whorf, Benjamin Lee  
1956 *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. John B. Carroll, editor. New York: The Technology Press of MIT and John Wiley and Sons.
- Woodward, Mark R.  
1989 *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*. Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press.  
1993 'Textual Exegesis as Social Commentary: Religious, Social, and Political Meanings of Indonesian Translations of Arabic Hadith Texts.' *Journal of Asian Studies* 52(3):565-583.
- Wright, Christopher J. H.  
1990 *God's People in God's Land*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Wright, Nigel  
1986 *The Radical Kingdom*. Eastbourne, Sussex, England: Kingway Publishers.
- Yoder, John H.  
1972 *The Politics of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Zaki, Yaqub  
1991 'The Qur'an and Revelation.' In *Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths*. Dan Cohn-Sherbok, editor. Pp. 41-54. London: Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd.