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Forces for Change in the Regional Performing Arts of Indonesia

In this article\(^1\) I discuss a number of forces – tourism, television, the cassette industry, and, above all, the cultural policies of the Indonesian government – that have in recent decades sought to reshape the arts of Indonesia to their own ends. My focus is primarily on the regional performing arts,\(^2\) and my stance is critical, since I believe that many of the changes promoted by these forces are ones that will, if they actually occur, severely impoverish Indonesian artistic and spiritual life. I should say at the outset that I am not trying to present a theoretical analysis of the workings of these forces, but rather to assess the actual extent and effects of such change. Since 1990, I have been engaged in recording regional music in widely scattered parts of Indonesia, as part of a project of the Smithsonian Institution and the Masyarakat Seni Pertunjukan Indonesia. My comments are thus those of someone directly involved in trying to identify and strengthen vital arts throughout Indonesia, and they are addressed primarily to others concerned with the future of those arts.

\textit{Government policy: the constitutional basis}

In May 1945, when it was clear that Japan would soon lose control of the former Dutch East Indies, a group of some seventy men and women began meeting in Jakarta to discuss the conceptual and institutional framework of an independent Indonesia. The group called itself the Exploratory Committee on Efforts to Prepare for the Independence of Indonesia (\textit{Badan Pen-}

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\(^2\) ‘Regional’ performing arts are those linked by history, language, or culture to a particular region (\textit{daerah}) of Indonesia. Since ethnicity is generally not acknowledged by the Indonesian government, ‘regional’ often serves as a euphemism for ‘ethnic’. To refer to the regional arts of, say, West Sumatra, is to refer, by implication, to the arts of the Minangkabau, who are the predominant ethnic group in that region. ‘Regional’ arts may be contrasted with ‘pan-Indonesian’ arts, which are performed using the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, and are addressed to Indonesians without regard to geography or ethnicity. (It is tempting to call these pan-Indonesian arts ‘national’, but since this paper deals in part with ideas of ‘national culture’, the usage might introduce unnecessary confusion. Such confusion has sometimes arisen in my conversations with Indonesians, for whom ‘national’ when applied to, say, music, often means ‘patriotic’.)
Eventually the group split into three smaller committees: one to consider problems of defence, one to consider economics and finance, and one to draft a constitution for the nation-to-be.

Among the concerns of the constitution committee was the proper character of Indonesia’s future culture: what kinds of knowledge and what values should be taught in the schools, what social, spiritual, and artistic traditions should be supported by the government — in short, what sort of people should Indonesians strive to become? Debate on these questions, which had been heated in the 1930s and early 1940s, centred on certain key oppositions: Western (European, foreign) versus Eastern (Asian, indigenous), and regional (Javanese, Sundanese, etc.) versus national (Indonesian).³

On 13 July 1945, a month before independence was finally proclaimed, the constitution committee considered a draft that took a clear position on one of these central questions:

‘The government must advance the national culture of Indonesia, and to that end [it must] advance the culture of each region, as pillars of that national culture’.⁴

But the committee appears to have backed away from this position almost immediately, striking out two-thirds of the statement.⁵ What was left eventually (after a change only in the force of the verb) became the text of the 1945 Constitution’s clause 32:

‘The government shall advance [lit.: advances] the national culture of Indonesia’.⁶

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³ Several published exchanges on these topics are collected in Mihardja 1977.
⁴ ‘Pemerintah harus memajukan kebudayaan nasional Indonesia dan bagi itu memajukan kebudayaan dari masing-masing daerah, sebagai rukun dari kebudayaan nasional itu’ (Bahar et al. 1992:184). This, clause 34, is the only mention of national or regional culture in the draft constitution. The draft was prepared by the Sub-committee for Drafting the Constitution (Panitia Kecil Perancang Undang-undang Dasar), headed by R. Soepomo, and was submitted on 13 July 1945 to the full committee of the same name (Panitia Perancang Undang-undang Dasar), headed by Soekarno.
⁵ The proposal to omit the mention of regional culture was made at the 13 July 1945 meeting by Soekarno and Oto Iskandardinata (Bahar et al. 1992:178). Unfortunately, no reports of the discussions leading up to the submission of the draft, nor any concerning Soekarno’s and Iskandardinata’s revision, seem to have survived.
⁶ ‘Pemerintah memajukan kebudayaan nasional Indonesia’ (Undang-undang Dasar [UUD] 1945: pasal 32). Aside from a brief period in 1945, the UUD 1945 was not implemented until 1959. The constitution of the federal Republik Indonesia Serikat (in effect only from late 1949 until mid-1950) and the unitary republic’s Provisional Constitution of 1950 (in effect until 1959) did not broach the question of national culture as distinct from or similar to regional culture. Using identical wording, the two documents say only that the government shall advance the development of the nation.
The revised, abbreviated text was sent to the full Exploratory Committee, where it apparently caused consternation. Within two days Soepomo, as spokesman for the constitution committee, had to explain in a general session (15 July 1945):

‘[The clause stating that] the government shall advance the national culture of Indonesia [...] does not mean that we reject the existence of regional cultures. People are saying, “Now Javanese dance and Javanese culture are not Indonesian culture, and we have to create new ones.” That’s not what we mean. Javanese, Balinese, Sundanese culture – these are all Indonesian culture. They must be respected and revered. The clause means that because we want to institute unification [persatuan], we must, so far as we are able, create a national Indonesian culture. What that culture will be is up to the people.’ (Bahar et al. 1992:224.)

What the committee had gained in concision it had lost in clarity. In the earlier formulation, national culture is founded on or sustained by regional culture. In the second (and final) version, with regional culture cut out, the connection between regional and national is unspecified. Soepomo’s explanation seems to waffle: regional cultures are Indonesian culture, but then again they aren’t. Presumably what he meant is that regional culture is necessarily linked to specific regions, whereas the new nation needs a national culture, one that can be considered equally the property of any citizen. But does it need national culture instead of or as well as regional culture? And why are regional achievements not considered the heritage of all citizens of the nation?

The official Clarification (Penjelasan) of the Constitution takes a different approach. The clarification of clause 32 reads:

‘The culture of the nation [bangsa] is culture that arises as the product of the thought and character of the entire people of Indonesia. Old and authentic culture is found in high cultural achievements [lit.: peaks of culture] in regions throughout Indonesia [and is] considered the culture of the nation. Cultural effort must be directed to the advancement of civilization, cultivation, and unification, and should not reject new materials from foreign culture that can develop and enrich the culture of the [Indonesian] people and raise the level of humanity of the Indonesian people.’

in culture, art, and knowledge, without infringing on the freedom [whose freedom is unspecified; presumably that of individuals] to engage in these pursuits (Konstitusi RIS: pasal 38; UUDS 1950: pasal 40).

7 The Constitution was formally announced on 18 August 1945, and the Clarification on 23 November 1945. The Clarification, which was apparently assembled from reports prepared by Soepomo during his chairmanship of the Subcommittee for Drafting the Constitution, acquired the status of law when it was published in the Berita Repoeblik Indonesia on 15 February 1946 (Bahar et al. 1992:374-5 and Lampiran C).

8 ‘Kebudayaan bangsa ialah kebudayaan yang timbul sebagai buah usaha budinya
For a clarification, the first two sentences are remarkably obscure. The first, in particular, manages to come down simultaneously on opposing sides of the issue it addresses. On the one hand, it can be read as saying that national culture is the totality of regional cultures and includes anything that has developed among the various ethnic groups living within the borders of the new nation of Indonesia. Read in this way, the sentence is consonant with statements by the educator Ki Hadjar Dewantara and by Sanoesi Pane, a prominent writer of the 1930s and 1940s:

‘Indonesian culture already exists, if we accept as the culture of the Indonesian nation all the cultures that now are found in the regions of all the islands of Indonesia’ (Dewantara [1950?] in 1967:87).

‘[Alisjahbana] says that in the eras of Majapahit, Diponegoro, and Tengku Umar, Indonesianness did not yet exist. In my opinion, he is incorrect. Indonesianness did already exist, even in those times, Indonesianness of mores [adat] and art. Only the nation of Indonesia had not yet emerged; Indonesians were not yet aware that they were one people’ (Pane 1935 in Mihardja 1977:23).

On the other hand, the same sentence in the Clarification can be construed to mean that national culture consists only of what is shared by all Indonesians, in which case it must exclude anything created before the twentieth century (when the idea of a unified and independent Indonesia arose) and anything whose relevance is limited by language or content to a specific region. Surprisingly, this reading, like the first one, finds support in a statement made by Dewantara:

‘Indonesian culture does not exist yet, cannot exist yet. Culture cannot be made; it has to occur, and its occurrence is not rapid or sudden: it grows, like any living thing, slowly, in stages, by evolution, not revolution.’ (Dewantara 1937 in 1967:229.)

This second position is also the one held by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana and echoed sixty years later by Edi Sedyawati, who in 1993 was appointed as the government’s director-general of culture:

‘The Indonesian spirit is the determination that arose in the twentieth century among our millions of people to unite and together take their proper place beside other nations. [...] The spirit of Indonesianness that

rakyat Indonesia seluruhnya. Kebudayaan lama dan asli terdapat sebagai puncak-puncak kebudayaan di daerah-daerah di seluruh Indonesia, terhitung sebagai kebudayaan bangsa. Usaha kebudayaan harus menuju ke arah kemajuan adab, budaya dan persatuan, dengan tidak menolak bahan-bahan baru dari kebudayaan asing yang dapat memperkembangkan dan memperkaya kebudayaan bangsa sendiri, serta mempertinggi derajat kemanusiaan bangsa Indonesia.’ (UUD 1945: pasal 32, Penjelasan.)

Dewantara may, in fact, have contributed to the writing of the Clarification of clause 32. See note 10 below.
now lives among the Indonesian people will certainly produce its own culture. This new culture will differ from pre-Indonesian culture.' (Alisjahbana 1935 in Mihardja 1977:27-8.)

‘National culture is not the sum [penjumlahan] of ethnic cultures. National culture is something new, something that has arisen since the existence of the nation of Indonesia, thus [beginning] around 1928’ (Sedyawati 1994).10

However the first sentence of the Clarification is read, the second sentence contradicts it. If national culture is understood as including all regional cultures, then the second sentence abruptly narrows the inclusion to ‘old and authentic’ forms only; if national culture refers solely to what is pan-Indonesian in content and origin, then inclusion of regional forms, no matter how old or authentic, is inconsistent.

A further problem with the second sentence is that it posits undefined (and probably undefinable) criteria for the evaluation of regional culture, and implies that a cultural winnowing should be carried out on the basis of such evaluation. If ‘old and authentic’ culture and ‘peaks of culture’ are part of national culture, then new and unauthentic (hybrid? modified?) forms, and anything that falls short of a peak, must not be. The Constitution obliges the government to advance the national culture; by implication, whatever does not qualify should not be advanced.11

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10 Sedyawati refers to 1928 not, of course, as the beginning of Indonesia’s existence as an independent state, but as the date of the famous Oath of Youth, Sumpah Pemuda, proclaiming the unity of Indonesia and Indonesians. I thank Rachel Cooper for bringing Sedyawati’s 1994 speech to my attention and providing me with a tape recording of it.

11 The phrase ‘peaks of culture’ (puncak-puncak kebudayaan) is generally associated with Ki Hadjar Dewantara, who used it frequently in his writings after 1945. Koentjaroningrat states (1985:116n.; compare 109n.) that Dewantara invented the phrase, but he gives no support for this. So far as I know, the phrase does not appear in Dewantara’s writings before 1945. Though Dewantara was a member of BPUPKI, he was not on the constitution committee. His ideas may, of course, have had influence there even so. In any case, Dewantara made the phrase his own in later years, expounding and elaborating upon it extensively.

It is clear that Dewantara intended the concept of cultural peaks as a guide to selection:

‘The national culture of Indonesia is all the peaks and essences [sari-sari] of culture that have value, throughout the archipelago, both old and new, that are national in spirit. In this connection, do not hesitate to:

a) stop supporting any old form of culture that hinders the advancement of humanistic life [hidup perikemanusiaan];
b) continue to support old forms of culture that have value and utility for humanistic life; where necessary, this support may involve changing them, improving them, or adapting them to the new world and era.’ (Dewantara 1952 in 1967:96-7.)

Haryati Soebadio, director-general of culture from 1983 to 1987, expressed a similar view thirty years later:

‘[Elements of] the nation’s cultural heritage […] should be preserved [dilestarikan] to the extent that they are evaluated [dinilai] as “peaks of regional
In an essay written in the 1970s but published in 1985, the anthropologist Koentjaraningrat tried to circumvent the problems in the constitutional formulation by developing a value-free interpretation of ‘peaks of culture’. One of the functions of national culture, he proposed, is to provide a system of concepts and symbols that gives identity to individuals as Indonesian citizens. For an element of a regional culture to work as part of the national culture, it must be one that many Indonesians from other regions can value highly and can be proud to claim as their own. Such an element would be a cultural peak. Koentjaraningrat did not try to establish why an element might be highly valued outside its home region; the criterion for identifying a peak is the regard in which it is held.12

Subsequently, however, Koentjaraningrat gave up his rescue attempt. ‘Peaks of culture’ is written into the Constitution and we are stuck with it, he wrote in 1992, but the metaphor is ‘unfortunate’, because it suggests that culture is static and unchanging, and that our idea of what the peaks are is similarly fixed. Moreover, the whole concept is divisive, because it encourages ethnic groups to compete over the relative status of their cultural products. Some groups will inevitably lose the competition and conclude that their culture is without value, whereas ‘in fact, every culture possesses and can contribute a cultural peak that is characteristic, beautiful, and valuable, and that is not found in the cultures of other groups’.13

culture”. [...] Those intangible elements [including arts and crafts] that are considered no longer relevant [relevan] should be documented fully as materials for scholarship, and those that are still useful [berguna] should be preserved, in the sense of being taught as part of national culture through both formal and informal education.’ (Soebadio 1982-83:8.)

As a final example of selectivity, consider the surprising statement by Harsja W. Bachtiar, representing the minister of education and culture at a 1985 conference on Balinese culture. According to a report in Kompas (28 December 1985), Bachtiar said that the only regional cultures that had as yet contributed elements to the national culture were the Melayu culture of Riau and the Javanese culture of Central and East Java. For Balinese cultural elements to be accepted, scholars would have to write articles in the Indonesian language presenting the peaks of Balinese culture to experts in Indonesian national culture, who would evaluate them and decide whether they should be incorporated into (dijadikan unsur) the national culture and be considered the common property of Indonesians (milik bersama).

12 Up to this point, Koentjaraningrat’s discussion is carefully even-handed. However, he then provides a list of cultural peaks. The performing arts included are: traditional music and dance of Bali and Java, wayang theatre, and the self-defence dance (pencak silat) of Sunda, Java, and West Sumatra (Koentjaraningrat 1985:111-8, 124-5). (Compare Dewantara ([1950?] in 1967:87): ‘Indonesian culture is of a high level because of the existence of some peaks of culture in various regions, especially in Java.’) Koentjaraningrat could have preserved his neutrality if he had designated these as ‘already accepted’ cultural peaks, for a logical next step in his argument — which he did not take but which Edi Sediyawati (1994) did — is to urge that information about the cultural achievements of all peoples of Indonesia be disseminated widely, so that Indonesians can appreciate them and become proud of them. In this way some would acquire the status of cultural peaks, and the national culture would be enriched.

13 In the 1992 article, Koentjaraningrat again provides a list, comparable to the one
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During the Soekarno era, Ki Hadjar Dewantara argued that national culture would eventually replace regional culture: the regional cultures would converge and coalesce into a unified Indonesian culture. But the nation did not want to wait for this slow process to occur. The government’s primary cultural concern was to assemble, as quickly as possible, an explicitly national culture. For example, beginning in the late 1950s, it attempted to establish the Melayu dance serampan duabelas (in a North Sumatran version) as a national dance that could replace Western couple dancing as a social activity for young people.

Another example of the Soekarno-era effort to create an instant national culture out of regional materials is the support given by RRI, the state-run radio network, to the genre of music then known as hiburan daerah (‘regional entertainment [music]’). RRI commissioned for broadcast (and later for publication and sale) numerous recordings of this genre, in which songs sung in regional languages and ostensibly deriving from regional cultures were adapted to (or composed in) standard Western tunings and idioms and were accompanied by cocktail-lounge combos. Hiburan daerah seems to have had a more solid existence in recordings and broadcasts than in actual performance, and without RRI’s support and promotion the genre would probably have fizzled sooner than it did. (Even with RRI’s help, it did not survive into the New Order.)

The Soekarno government also attempted to support regional arts, but (understandably, given all the other problems of the nation at that time) it was unable to do so in a consistent or comprehensive way. Conservatories in the 1985 article discussed in note 11 but different in important respects. In the 1992 list, the items, which include most forms of the traditional arts, are identified not as ‘peaks of culture’ but as elements of the ‘ancestral heritage that strengthens identity’, and they are listed generically, as ‘traditional music’, ‘traditional theatre’, and so on. No specific regional arts are singled out as pre-eminent.

Dewantara 1982. This undated article was published in an anniversary volume for Tamanisiswa, Dewantara’s school system, more than twenty years after Dewantara’s death. Internal evidence—a reference to the Kementerian Pendidikan, Pengajaran dan Kebudayaan—suggests that the article dates from some time in the period 1948–1959, the years when the department that is now the Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan bore that name. For an early statement of Dewantara’s trikon theory (‘continuity, convergence, concentricity’), see Dewantara 1937.

For a brief, critical summary of this effort, see Sedyawati 1987:248-9.

The same idea, that regional music when Westernized will become national music, surfaces in a 1959 speech by President Soekarno:

‘Here’s an advertisement for a School of Rock’n’Roll Dance. Then it says: this band, that band. Out of ten bands, nine have English names! Look and see, am I right or wrong? There’s the Blue Moon Music Band, there’s the Teenagers Music Band. And if you look at what they play, not one of them plays Pangkur or Sinom. Not one of them plays Lenso. No! All of their songs are foreign.’ (Soekarno 1959:20.)

Pangkur and Sinom are melodies from the gamelan and sung-poetry traditions of Java and Bali; lenso is a dance of the Minahasa in northern Sulawesi. For more detail on hiburan daerah, see Yampolsky 1987.
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for Central Javanese and Balinese dance and gamelan music were established.\(^\text{17}\) RRI, at roughly the same time that it was underwriting *hiburan daerah*, sponsored a recording project by the Dutch-born ethnomusicologist Bernard Uizzerdraat that produced, for broadcast, what are among the earliest documentary recordings of music from such far-flung peoples and places as Kerinci, Angkola, Toba, Minang, Minahasa, Makasar, and Roti.\(^\text{18}\)

It was only with the New Order – more precisely, with the designing of the second Five-Year Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun*, or *Repelita*), which was proposed in 1973 and went into effect in 1974 – that the government began to concern itself systematically with regional culture.\(^\text{19}\) Strikingly, much of the ambiguity found in the constitutional formulation on national and regional culture is circumvented in the New Order’s own charters. For example, the doctrine of archipelagic unity (*wawasann Nusantara*) – which was adopted as part of the justification for the government’s programme of development and which maintains that the Indonesian archipelago is a political, social, cultural, economic, and military unit – declares:

‘The nation’s culture is in fact one, and the existing varieties of culture [that is, regional culture] demonstrate the richness of the national culture. This rich variety is the capital and basis for the development of the entire national culture, the results of which can be enjoyed by the nation.’\(^\text{20}\)

\(^\text{17}\) Anderson Sutton (1991:175) suggests that part of the aim in establishing the earliest conservatory (Konservatori Karawitan Indonesia, founded in Surakarta in 1950) was to provide a setting in which the regional arts would all blend together. He cites an article by the Lekra figure Boejoeng Saleh (1956) protesting efforts to ‘create a new hybrid from all kinds of regional culture in a laboratory’.

\(^\text{18}\) These recordings, made in the mid-1950s, were issued on 78-rpm discs bearing the label or trademark *Indravox*. They were distributed to RRI stations but were not sold publicly. Uizzerdraat was in later years known variously as S. Brata, Suryabrata, and Bernard Suryabrata.

\(^\text{19}\) The first Repelita (enacted 1968) mentions neither national nor regional culture. An early expression of the New Order’s concern with regional culture, announced in June 1971 (in the middle of the first Repelita), was Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, ‘Beautiful Indonesia-in-Miniature Park’. On Taman Mini, see Pemberton 1994: chapter 4.

\(^\text{20}\) ‘Budaya Indonesia pada hakikatnya adalah satu; sedangkan corak ragam budaya yang ada menggambarkan kekayaan Budaya Bangsa yang menjadi modal dan landasan pengembangan Budaya Bangsa seluruhnya, yang hasil-hasilnya dapat dinikmati oleh Bangsa’ (GBHN 1973 in Aziz 1994:408).

The ‘Guidelines of State Policy’ (*Garis-garis besar haluan negara*, or GBHN) are the official authority and rationale for the Repelita. The GBHN are drawn up, once every five years, by the People’s Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat), nominally as an instruction to the President. (The five GBHN issued in the years 1973–1993 are conveniently collected in Aziz 1994.) The Repelita is the plan for implementing the GBHN; it is enacted, usually a year after the GBHN are determined, by a Presidential Decree (*Peraturan Presiden*).
The notion of a conflict between regionalist past and nationalist present is absent here, as is Dewantara’s idea of convergence. There is no need for the regional cultures to melt away; they are ‘important elements that enrich and give variety to the national culture’. While a distinction is apparently still made between regional cultures and the ‘entire’ national culture, the nature of the distinction is vague. The national culture subsumes the regional cultures without replacing them, and policy regarding national culture thus necessarily affects regional cultures as well.

The key elements in the New Order’s strategy for advancing national culture are: developing (membina)\(^2\) regional culture, promoting the use of the national language, stimulating creativity, and promoting symbols – such as those of national struggle – that can be a focus of national pride.\(^3\) Underlying and guiding all of these activities are the tenets of Pancasila. Three pitfalls are to be guarded against: feudalism, negative foreign influence, and narrow regionalism.\(^4\)

What is not stated directly in the GBHN but is obvious from the government’s diction is that national culture cannot be allowed to develop on its own. Along with the ubiquitous membina, we find in the GBHNs and Repelitas such verbs as memelihara (foster), merangsang (stimulate), and mengembangkan (develop, cultivate) to describe the government’s programmes relating to national culture, and memupuk (fertilize), melestarikan (preserve), menggali (uncover, discover), and menyelamatkan (safeguard) for its programmes in regional culture. Clearly, national culture and its subset, regional culture, must be supervised at every turn by the government.

But why? Mary Zurbuchen has offered (1990:133-4) an analysis of why the government believes it must involve itself so deeply in culture. She identifies two main reasons. One is to ensure that regional loyalties, as symbolized in regional culture, do not threaten national unity: valuation of


\(^{22}\) Governmental prose has three words that are all commonly translated into English as ‘develop’: membina, mengembangkan, and membangun. The first corresponds to ‘develop’ in the sense of a real estate concern developing a tract of land whose potential has not yet been exploited. The root of mengembangkan is kembang, ‘flower’, so the word matches ‘develop’ in the sense of ‘cultivate’. Membangun really means to ‘build’ or ‘construct’, and corresponds to ‘develop’ as used for national programmes to promote economic growth and industrialization.

\(^{23}\) Promoting the use of the national language and stimulating creativity are not mentioned in the 1973 GBHN; they first appear in the GBHN of 1978.

diversity must not lead to fragmentation. The other reason is that culture is seen as 'creating the conditions favorable for [economic and technological] development'.

Enunciations of this second principle can be found throughout the New Order GBHNs and Repelitas, from 1973 on. Zurbuchen translates a brief statement from Repelita III (1978) on the importance of culture to development:

‘Culture is closely tied to the national development now being implemented, because on the one hand development requires prerequisite cultural values that support development, while on the other hand development results in side effects whose resolution hopefully can be discovered by means of culture’.

To supplement this prosaic formulation, let me quote an extended aria from the GBHN of 1988:

‘National culture based on Pancasila is the manifestation of the creativity, sensibility, and will of the Indonesian people and constitutes the totality of the efforts of Indonesians to develop their status and prestige as a people. It is directed toward giving perspective and meaning to national development in all aspects of life. National development is thus development informed by culture.

Indonesian culture that reflects the noble values of the people must be continuously fostered, built up, and developed, in order to strengthen the understanding and observance of Pancasila, elevate the quality of life, strengthen the character of the people, increase the sense of self-respect and national pride, reinforce the spirit of unity and unification of the people, and enable the national culture to take an active part in realizing the aspirations of the nation in the future. [...]’

As part of enacting national development, we must continue to create

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25 Fuad Hassan, minister of education and culture from 1985 to 1993, justifies government supervision of culture by warning of a different kind of fragmentation:

‘A development strategy for culture needs to be planned very carefully and projected as far as possible into the future. To allow the dynamic of culture to proceed without guidance can result in the emergence of sub-cultures or even counter-cultures that are not always appropriate to our goals.’ (Hassan 1988:19; sub-culture and counter-culture are in English in the original.)

Hassan defines his terms as follows: sub-cultures are temporary fads or experiments, typical of ‘youth culture’ and not seriously challenging the established culture, while counter-cultures ridicule and reject the values of the prevailing culture. Hassan is concerned here, I believe, not with dissatisfaction from the regional, rural periphery but with rebellion among the youth of urban centres.

26 For a powerful analysis, at a deeper and more conceptual level, of the significance of culture (particularly Central Javanese culture) to the architects of the New Order, see Pemberton 1994.

27 Repelita III 3:18, trans. Zurbuchen. The side-effects referred to, she suggests, are those resulting from the conflict of indigenous and foreign values. Since development relies on imported technology, foreign values will inevitably enter Indonesia and may undermine indigenous ones.
an atmosphere conducive to the growth and development of social responsibility and solidarity, national discipline, and cultural attitudes that can meet the challenges of development. Such attitudes are: self-reliance in community, sensitivity to others, discussion to reach consensus, orientation toward the future, hard work, honesty and nobility, thrift, accuracy, simplicity, orderliness, efficient use of time, and dedication. In particular, we must foster cultural attitudes that support efforts at renewal, including the development of knowledge and technology. (GBHN 1988 in Aziz 1994:243-4.)

With all of this at stake, it is no wonder that the government wants to keep a tight hold on culture. And indeed, since 1973 the New Order government has undertaken a vast project of cultural engineering, with perhaps its primary focus on the arts, both sacred and secular. This project has been little concerned with the most obvious and widely disseminated artistic manifestations of national culture – the pan-Indonesian literature, theatre, film, and popular music that are written, acted, and sung in Indonesian. Although pan-Indonesian work is screened (sometimes before and sometimes after publication or public presentation) for subversive, immoral, or irreligious content, there seems to be little attempt to shape the art forms themselves or the attitudes of their creators.

Instead, the focus of government intervention has been regional culture. In particular, the Ministry of Education and Culture, known as Depdikbud, has been extremely active in the field of regional arts, all across the country, from the provincial level down to the villages: registering performers, inventorying genres, supporting a small number of high-school or college-level conservatories and music academies, monitoring content, suggesting technical or stylistic changes in performance, selecting individuals and groups for financial assistance, producing festivals and competitions, commissioning performances for visiting dignitaries and state occasions, subsidizing appearances on local television, and even arranging travel to Jakarta to perform at the national theme park, Taman Mini.

The thrust of Depdikbud’s activities is threefold: to control the political content of performances, to control their moral content, and to upgrade (the English word is used, or its Indonesian equivalent, meningkatkan) their artistic quality.

One might think that the first concern in the control of political content would be dissent, but in fact I have heard of little open expression of dissent in the regional arts since the beginning of the New Order. This is

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28 Depdikbud is by no means the only government agency to intervene in the regional arts. Local and regional authorities (camat, bupati, gubernur) sometimes commission performances or issue directives to performers. The Department of Information (Departemen Penerangan) concerns itself with ways to use the arts for the transmission of government messages. It may be that I use ‘Depdikbud’ too loosely in this paper, ascribing to Depdikbud some practices that are really those of Penerangan or other branches of the government.
not to say that there is no dissent, only that artists are afraid to express it: they censor themselves rather than risk the government’s displeasure. If there were dissent, the government would undoubtedly crack down, but as it is, Depdikbud concentrates on ensuring that actors and singers incorporate government messages into their speeches and song lyrics (for example, urging audiences to practice birth control, or pay their taxes). Often performers are also instructed to increase their use of Indonesian language.

With regard to moral content, the government is concerned that the arts not give offence to any of the five official religions of Indonesia, particularly to Islam; and also that they not condone or be directly associated with activities that are considered immoral (gambling, drunkenness, prostitution, sexual licence). Genres like the Central and East Javanese tayuban, or other similar dance-party genres (such as gandrung in Banyuwangi), where the guests often get drunk and try to embrace the professional dancing-women, are thus prime candidates for the moral equivalent of upgrading. The anthropologist Amrih Widodo is documenting local Depdikbud efforts to discourage drinking at tayuban, to impose an abbreviated performance-length (giving the guests less time to get drunk), and in general to turn tayuban into a more seemly and proper affair.

Seemliness and propriety – respectability – are also, I believe, the essence of the notion of upgrading artistic quality. The fundamental premise underlying Depdikbud’s upgrading programmes is that there is something wrong with the arts as they stand, and usually what is wrong is that they are too rough, too crude: not respectable. A genre like topeng Betawi, when performed by barefoot actors standing in the mud, is unseemly; so Depdikbud tells the troupes that they should refuse engagements if the host does not agree to build a stage for them to play on. One

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29 For discussion and instances of this sort of pressure on Central Javanese wayang kulit puppeteers, see Clara van Groenendael 1985: chapters 7 and 8.
30 Or, as Anderson Sutton has phrased it: ‘One recurring theme in government policy statements is the idea that the arts as they currently exist are imperfect [and] in need of improvement’ (1991:173). Endo Suanda (1985:417) writes that a high Depdikbud official with whom he had dealings seemed to believe that ‘tradition is something that is broken and has to be fixed before it can be used’. See chapter 6 in Sutton 1991 for a more detailed look at Depdikbud’s upgrading policy and procedures in Central and East Java, and see Suanda 1985 and Murgiyanto 1993 for general (critical) observations on upgrading.

It should be noted that the desire to upgrade the traditional arts is not peculiar to the New Order. Ruth McVey describes efforts by the Indonesian Communist Party in the early 1960s to ‘raise the cultural tone of ladrak and other lower-class arts by moving them towards a modernen and halus style’ (1986:33). Laurie Sears (forthcoming) traces the same kind of effort back into the nineteenth century.

31 In making upgrading recommendations to a topeng Betawi troupe I recorded, Depdikbud also objected to a particular gesture: an actor pretending to be angry might give another actor’s head a push with his fingers or palm. Depdikbud said they
of Depdikbud’s unacknowledged operating principles is that urban is more respectable than rural, and hence performances that exhibit ‘urban’ standards – such as fancy costumes, elaborate production values, professionalism, variety in programming, and modern (usually Western) instruments – are more respectable than those that do not.

Depdikbud’s festivals, competitions, and commissions are the crucial means by which it inculcates the aesthetic of respectability. Communities are invited or urged to participate in an event by preparing a performance, and Depdikbud makes suggestions (with the force of commands) as to how this should be done: face forward, not in a circle; wear nice new uniforms; one instrument sounds thin here, more would be better; instead of one pair of dancers, how about three pairs; these women are so old, you should get some younger ones who are nice to look at; shorten this so the audience isn’t bored; this song would be better if it had a dance with it.32 Often the net effect of such changes as abbreviating performances, ‘modernizing’ scales and instrumentation, simplifying the repertoire, and foregrounding inexperienced younger performers is to trivialize the art form. Apparently, Depdikbud sees no conflict between promoting such changes and its responsibility to ‘safeguard’ or ‘preserve’ the traditional arts: the changes are made merely so that the arts will be, in a common phrase, *sesuai dengan irama zaman*, ‘in step with the times’.

What the times demand, evidently, is art that is neat and orderly, disciplined, inoffensive, attractive or impressive to look at, pleasant to listen to. And indeed, some of the Indonesian performing arts best known and most respected both in Indonesia and abroad (the dance and gamelan music of Central Javanese courts and Balinese temples, for instance) fit the requirements without difficulty. Other Indonesian arts, however, may not care what they look like: they are concerned with their music and their dance, but not with glamour and costumes. (Depdikbud will attempt to revamp them with enhanced visuals.) Still other arts show different qualities and impulses altogether: they celebrate wildness and irreverence, and encourage participants and spectators to let loose and be unruly. But these, performers quickly learn, are not characteristics that Depdikbud

should stop this. The troupe’s leader figured Depdikbud disliked the gesture because it was ‘impolite’.

32 This is a list of upgrading suggestions that have been recounted to me by performing groups, or that can be deduced from the differences between performances for local audiences and those for Depdikbud and TVRI. The last of the suggestions is reported by Acciaioli (1985), who also reports an instance of pressure applied (by the local Christian authorities) to one group to abandon their traditional dance for moral reasons and adopt a dance from another group; the movements of this second dance had been set by the *bupati* (a high-ranking official in the regional government). For a similar list of directions, see Suanda 1985:417. Suanda tells of a *topeng Cirebon* dancer who was instructed to stand up straight and push out the chest, disregarding the slightly angled posture that is characteristic of the genre.
values. If an art form is to be approved by Depdikbud, it must disown such features and conform to the Depdikbud aesthetic.\textsuperscript{33}

For a distressing example of upgrading, consider recent developments in the genre of song and dance called \textit{wor}, found on the island of Biak in Irian Jaya.\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Wor} in the past involved a seemingly chaotic kind of collective singing (technically heterophony) that somehow never fell apart. There was an extensive repertoire of song types and established texts, and new texts were constantly being created, often spontaneously during performance. Group \textit{wor} were sung primarily at the frequently rowdy night-long feasts that were a central element in Biak social life. Such feasts are now rare, and \textit{wor} itself was until recently obsolete, though many older people could still sing it when I first came to Biak in 1993 to record. By 1994, when I again came to Biak, the local government had got hold of \textit{wor} and sponsored a revival. In its new, official form, the repertoire contained only a few simple songs, which were performed in a clean, unison style, with none of the heterophony of old. The revival largely ignored the older singers who could have served as key resources. Instead, Depdikbud organized \textit{wor} competitions recruiting groups of children and teenagers, who obviously had no first-hand knowledge of the art. They were judged on their costumes and on a criterion utterly foreign to old-style \textit{wor}: precision or synchrony in song and movement.

With the exception of some of the older singers, whose expertise had been discounted, people in Biak seemed to see nothing inappropriate in this radical revision of \textit{wor}. Similarly, it must be said that throughout Indonesia, performers seem quite willing to follow Depdikbud's upgrading directives. Satisfying the local Depdikbud can lead to invitations to bigger events – competitions or festivals at the district, provincial, or even national level – or to a lucrative spot on the tourist circuit. In hopes of these rewards, performers do not seem to mind subordinating the local aesthetic to Depdikbud's.

Nor do they seem conscious that something still more basic is also at risk: the communal dimension of regional art. The changes Depdikbud promotes nullify the aspect of meaning that depends not on the sounds, words, movements, and symbols deployed, but on who is performing, who is observing, and what the local significance of the performance is. Part of the fun in a \textit{tayuban} is knowing who is doing what: who is dancing enthusiastically, who is drunk, whose movements parody whom. Many (if

\textsuperscript{33} One way to disown the unacceptable characteristics is to suppress them; another is to parody them. Art forms that have been upgraded often contain elements of self-parody. A common device is to turn a performance into a skit or playlet, with the performers presenting (trivializing) themselves as comic (often rustic) characters.

\textsuperscript{34} These comments are based primarily on a paper by Danilyn Rutherford (1995), and partly also on research that she and I conducted in Biak in 1993 and 1994 while making recordings for an album of Biak music (Rutherford and Yampolsky forthcoming).
not most) other regional genres invite an equally close involvement of the audience with the performance. When gambang kromong plays for Peranakan Chinese weddings in Jakarta, guests may take the microphone and sing verses as the ensemble plays; in performances of the Minangkabau genre saluang, members of the audience identify personally with specific songs in the repertoire and compete with each other to get ‘their’ songs performed. In the many societies where singers improvise verses or songs in performance, there is the likelihood of allusion to local personalities, events, and scandals.\(^\text{35}\) In at least one area of central Flores, villages two kilometres apart have entirely different repertoires of ritual songs, and each such repertoire is thus a unique representation of its community.

All of this local meaning and resonance is lost when an art form is redesigned for external consumption, whether by tourists, television viewers, or festival audiences. What Depdikbud is pushing is art directed toward outsiders and conforming to external aesthetic standards rather than art directed inward toward the community itself and conforming to the standards that have developed there. (Tourism is, of course, pushing the same thing.) But to redirect art in this manner is to cut it off from its source of meaning.

As Greg Acciaioli has pointed out (1985), when this redirecting and refashioning is applied to ritual performances tied to a ‘minority religion’ (any religion other than the five accepted by the state: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism), the effect is to undercut the religion itself and to aestheticize its rituals, reconstituting them as display or entertainment. Even when the art form in question is secular to begin with, its importance as a local focus and symbol of community is severely weakened. Acciaioli maintains that it is in fact the intent of government cultural policy to weaken ‘particularistic loyalties’ (those to individual localities or ethnic groups) and ‘emasculate’ regional adat (glossed as ‘ways of life’) (1985:161). Keith Foulcher, using similar arguments, writes that national culture seeks not to deny ‘tradition and the region’, but to ‘incorporate and disempower’ them (1990:302). I myself find it hard to picture Depdikbud operating in so Machiavellian a manner – or indeed so consistently or efficiently. I suspect rather that Acciaioli and Foulcher have identified what they predict will be the effects of government policy, and have then attributed those predicted effects to Depdikbud as its intentions. But, in any case, I agree with them that government policy may have the results they describe.

\(^\text{35}\) An example from western Flores: I was told that at the round dances held by young people at night, assignations are often made, and couples may wander off into the dark, to rejoin the circle later. If someone notices, a song may be raised, for instance: ‘Berta fell down in the garden, Anton’s clothes are all muddy!’ If the song is funny enough, it may be repeated on other occasions and become part of the ongoing repertoire.
Other forces: tourism, television, cassettes

I can speak more confidently of the aims of the tourist industry than I can of Depdikbud’s.36 Tourism needs exactly what Depdikbud, intentionally or not, is providing: shortened, neatened-up, decontextualized performances. In addition, tourism hopes for the exotic flavour of ritual. But ritual itself does not always fill the bill. Ritual is often bound to its own calendar, and it may require the respectful participation, or at least the informed inattention, of those in attendance. It may not be able to accept hordes of uncomprehending onlookers, and it may not be repeatable every time a new bus-load appears. The most efficient way to overcome these inconveniences is to desacralize the ritual – turning it, as Acciaioli says, into display.

Pancasila offers an elegant mechanism for desacralization, since one of the five tenets is that Indonesians must believe in a single all-powerful deity. Religions or belief systems that cannot be construed monotheistically are thus explicitly disenfranchised by the government, and their adherents are pressured to convert to an acceptable world religion. Once they do so, their rituals become available for tourist packaging.37 This is apparently what has happened in parts of central Flores, where head-hunting rituals are now enacted as playlets on demand. Tourists are led to a formerly sacred spot in the village, where they see ‘priests’ preparing ‘warriors’ for battle while the gong ensemble plays to encourage them. Next the tourists are led to another spot, to see one group pretend to ambush another; then they see a full battle depicted, at the end of which a severed head made of rubber is produced from under a cloth and carried off by triumphant dancers.38

In some areas where inhabitants still hold to the old beliefs, tourism, working in tandem with the government, has taken over the administration of certain rituals, to local dissatisfaction:

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36 It is important to remember that the promotion of tourism is one of the government’s priorities for national economic development, and the minister of tourism is a cabinet post. Thus in one sense it is incorrect to distinguish between the government and tourism. On the other hand, if we compare government involvement in tourism to its involvement in overt cultural policy, we see that government is autonomous in cultural policy, whereas in tourism it must work closely with private capital, both domestic and foreign, and also with other governments and international bodies that regulate tourism and transport. In this sense, there is a legitimate distinction between the government’s aims and those of tourism as an extra- (or supra-) governmental force.

37 Again one must be wary of identifying effects with intentions. I am not saying that Pancasila was conceived for the advancement of either tourism or economic development, only that instituting Pancasila can have consequences that benefit those pursuits.

38 This is a description of a performance of tari bebing that I saw in 1993 in the village of Hokor, Kabupaten Sikka. Tari bebing was created in 1973, and is performed only for tourists and important visitors, never for the entertainment of the villagers themselves.
Local people [in Kalimantan], mainly the old folks, resent having to request permission [from the government’s Tourist Office] to hold a religious festival, having to hold it at an inappropriate time (e.g. a harvest feast in May instead of February), to surrender its organization to a provincial committee, or to stage phony rituals turned into a show in improper circumstances (or at all) for the sake of visitors. Even in Christian villages, religious leaders make sure the old gods are not angered by the festival’s improper setting. They subtly modify the proceedings, replacing a sacred item with an innocuous, profane one and skipping the phases where the gods and spirits attend, so that there is no spiritual risk for the community.’ (Sellato 1995.)

Here, although the old people still consider the rituals sacred, de facto desacralization has already taken place, and villagers profane the rituals precisely in order to protect them (or themselves).

In any case, it is the government rather than the tourist industry that needs desacralization. What the tourist industry needs is the exotic but infinitely repeatable performance, and desacralization is simply a convenient means of achieving it. If it could be repeatable and stay sacred, that would be fine too. Similarly, the international tourist trade does not necessarily have the Indonesian government’s scruples about gambling, drunkenness, prostitution, and other activities that are officially deplored, nor does it care about government propaganda messages. Tourism and the government work hand in glove, but their aims are not identical.

I will close this part of the discussion by mentioning two other forces for change in the regional arts. Television and the cassette industry may be lumped together as ‘mass media’, but as with government and tourism, distinctions should be drawn.

After many years in which television broadcasting in Indonesia was exclusively a government prerogative, a loosening of controls began in the late 1980s, and several independent television stations have sprung up since then. The independent stations may produce their own entertainment programmes or may buy them from foreign television, but they may not relay foreign news, and their own news programming is subordinated to the government’s. (At the designated news times all Indonesian television stations, state or private, broadcast the identical news, produced by the government.) While in theory the independent stations could develop their own programmes on regional matters, including the arts, in fact they do not do so, preferring to broadcast material from abroad. So the only stations

39 Compare the account given by Rithaony Hutajulu, elsewhere in this volume, of government management of a Toba Batak ritual.
40 I am told that recently the ‘educational’ channel, TPI, has begun to broadcast programmes on regional culture. But judging from TPI’s performance so far, and the fact that the channel is owned by a daughter of the president, it seems highly unlikely that these programmes will take an attitude toward the regional arts that differs significantly from the government’s.
active in programming concerned with the regional arts are the government stations, and their needs are those of the government: professionalized, morally acceptable, propaganda-friendly performances, with or without ritual origins but in either case functionally secular.

The cassette industry, on the other hand, has a quite different set of needs. As everywhere else in the world, commercial recording in Indonesia tries to establish a framework of marketing categories – repertoire, performer, and genre or idiom of performance are the main ones – and then cycle items of raw material (an individual piece, a performer, or a kind of music) through the structure. A given song will be introduced by one singer and then imitated or reinterpreted by others; a given singer will produce a number of albums within one genre and then branch out to another genre; a successful song or composition will be translated into new genres or idioms. This system has a constant need for new material but needs also to fit that material into the framework. Accordingly, unless regional music can accommodate a system of star performers (whether individuals or ensembles) and can produce a stream of new repertoire, its appeal to the cassette industry is fatally limited.

Thus the operating logic of the industry pressures regional music to change in fundamental ways. Professionalism in performance is encouraged, for if everyone in a community has equal command of the music, why would anyone buy a recording? Proliferation of new repertoire is also encouraged – partly to provide new products for purchase, but also to make the repertoire so extensive that amateurs can no longer master it. Furthermore, the industry pushes interchange between regional musics – or, more commonly, between regional music and national or international musics – as a means of introducing not only new repertoire but also new idioms of performance. (This is, I believe, the structural reason why so many cassettes feature regional melodies arranged for European pop instrumentation.)

In the United States, television and recording are both branches of the entertainment industry, and both operate, for the most part, according to the commercial logic I have just described. In Indonesia, however, television – that is, the government-run television that presents regional arts – is a propaganda medium, and it follows official policy, not commercial logic. Unlike television, the cassette industry is under no obligation (and no particularly strong inducement) to incorporate propaganda messages or to promote religious orthodoxy and the desacralization of unorthodox ritual, nor does it have any internal commitment to respectability.

Still, since the cassette industry is subject to censorship by the

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41 The first two permutations are so common that examples are not needed. For repertoire crossing genre or idiom boundaries, consider Lokananta’s mid-1980s recordings of langgam Jawa songs (a Javanese adaptation of kroncong) transferred to gamelan, or the progress of the pop song Hati Yang Luka (Yampolsky 1987, 1989).
government, depends for operating permissions upon the government, and
aspires to reach not only the low-income rural market but also the higher-
income urban middle- and upper-class markets that share many of the
government’s values, the aesthetic and logic of cassette recordings are (as
with tourism and television) often congruent with those of the govern-
ment. The interests of the government and the industry would diverge only
if a market should emerge for a music expressing rebelliousness of some
sort (sexual, political, religious) that the government found unacceptable.
In such cases, the industry would wish to develop the market, and the
government to suppress it. In present-day Indonesia, the government
would undoubtedly win.

The effects: an interim report

These, then, are the principal political and economic forces pressing the
regional arts to change. It is important to recognize that although they
work together, they do not constitute a single, unified force. Resistance to
the changes they promote requires recognition of the particularities of their
aims and tendencies.

Is there any possibility of successful resistance? My only objection to
the articles by Acciaioli and Foulcher is that they lead to the conclusion
that there is nothing to be done. If the government’s cultural policy is
really just one element in a deliberate strategy to legitimize exploitation of
the regions (Foulcher), or to ‘domesticate’ the people through ‘enforced
homogenization’ (Acciaioli), what can lone voices hope to achieve? The
government will hardly give up its plans for the forests of Riau or Kali-
mantan or Irian Jaya simply because a small group bemoans the loss of this
flute or that song-form, or even the demise of forest societies that the
government regards as ‘isolated’ and ‘uncivilized’. But this is why I raised
the question of effects versus intentions: if the negative effects of change
are consciously intended by the government, then there is indeed little to
be done, but if they are instead (as I believe) unintended or secondary
effects, the byproducts of the desire to control and to ‘upgrade’, then
efforts can be made to mitigate the effects and modify the desires.

It would be a terrible waste to give up on the regional arts at this point.
It is true that the various forces for change have in many parts of Indonesia
succeeded in producing or eliciting the controlled, respectable, desacral-
ized, professionalized arts they want; but it is by no means clear that these
disinfected and upgraded forms always replace the original village forms.
Gandrung dancers and musicians in Banyuwangi have learned how to boil
down their nighthlong performance into a half-hour sketch for a festival or a
visiting dignitary, but this will hardly do for a wedding or circumcision
celebration in the village. The people in central Flores who perform the
headhunting playlet for tourists have a recreational dance (tari hegong)
that they do for themselves, with no sham battles or rubber heads. Barbara
Hatley (1990) reports that a sanitized reyog is now being performed in
Ponorogo, with female dancers instead of the pretty young men of the traditional form— but only for official visits. For public occasions in Biak, the government sponsors performances of the dance called *yospan*, featuring dancers in neat rows executing complicated steps in unison; but *yospan* is also the indispensable entertainment at village parties, where those tidy rows become a boisterous stream of dancers in happy disarray (Rutherford 1995). Or consider one of the great successes of the drive for respectability, the Sundanese *jaipongan* dance, which was created expressly to provide an alternative to disreputable dance genres too closely allied with prostitution and vulgar sexuality: *jaipongan* became so popular that a reclaimed, revulgarized version appeared among the urban poor.

I am suggesting that much of what the forces for change have produced so far is an official art, parallel to but divorced from the true artistic life of Indonesians. In the recording work that I have been doing since 1990, I have found performers and traditions all over Indonesia that are still vital and still important to their communities; often upgrading has taken place, but its effects are felt only in official contexts.42

Even in the societies whose people adhere to 'minority religions', the pressure from government, tourism, and organized religion to abandon traditional belief and the ritual arts that spring from it has in many cases not led to the eradication of either the arts or the beliefs. Some societies have reconfigured their religion so it can be classified as a local form of Hinduism (acknowledged as a 'world religion' by the government); some have converted superficially but maintained their old religion in secret; and some have converted sincerely but recontextualized and refunctonalized their art forms.43

While it seems that many regional arts have not yet been drastically

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42 *Wor*, discussed earlier, is not a counter-example here. The upgraded form is now virtually the only kind of *wor* heard in Biak, but that is not because it has supplanted the earlier kind. The older style was already obsolete before the Depdikbud revival began. Although we were able to find many groups that could remember *wor* and could sing it wonderfully after getting back in practice, there is ordinarily no occasion for them to do so.

43 Acciaioli, if I understand him correctly, would consider such refunctonalization to be the evisceration of the art form, but I do not agree. For one thing, it is not always certain that the old functions have been entirely forgotten or eradicated. (See Aragon 1991-92 and Schreiner 1970 for examples of the difficulty of truly desacralizing ritual and ritual music.) For another, Acciaioli treats the aestheticizing of ritual as though it meant emptying the ritual of meaning. The Masses of the Renaissance, or the church music of Bach, have for many modern listeners become thoroughly aestheticized, in just the sense that Acciaioli condemns; yet they still offer a way to experience imaginatively a world infused with religious conviction. I believe that precisely because art (and perhaps most particularly, though most abstractly, music) can confront its audience with an immediate apprehension of another way to experience life, it retains some of its power even when the culture that nourished it has died.
affected by the forces for change detailed here, one can hardly conclude that they are in no danger. Most of these surviving traditions are now in the hands of ageing performers who see no one from the next generation emerging to take over. The reasons given are familiar: young people aren't interested in the past and the old arts, they want to know what's happening in Jakarta; they leave the villages and move to the cities as soon as they possibly can. I believe there is a more basic reason as well: pervading the messages that come out of Jakarta, from government and media (both independent and state-run), is the premise that village life is backward and impoverished, and that villagers are boobs and bumpkins. What inducement does that offer to the young to commit themselves to village life and pour their energy into mastering a village art?

Some regional societies do, of course, continue to involve their youth in the traditional arts. In mountain communities of Flores I saw many young people participating vigorously in long nights of circle dancing; in Nias the lead singer of a hoho group consisting mainly of wizened oldsters was seventeen when I recorded him; in Aceh and West Sumatra, such flourishing genres as didong and indang are predominantly the music of young men; in Banyuwangi young people root for their local angklung or kuntulan groups with the fervour of small-town sports fans in the US cheering on the high-school team.

What enables such communities to retain the commitment of their youth? I have no full answer to this vitally important question, but one condition that is self-evidently conducive to youth involvement is pride and satisfaction in the local community and its traditions. But this condition is precisely what is under attack by urban media, with their message of contempt for regional life. Pride in the arts themselves is further undermined by the trivializing alterations promoted by Depdikbud, television, and the cassette industry as improvements. Even when the upgraded forms are reserved for official contexts only, they demonstrate the authorities' low regard for the local aesthetic and the unimproved tradition, and they accordingly work to reduce the value of the arts to their practitioners and inheritors. And the less value the inheritors of an art form see in it, the less reason they have to sustain it.

The reader may complain at this point (or may have been complaining for a while) that I give with one hand and take with the other. The arts are in bad shape because the government is upgrading them to death; but there is hope because upgrading is official and tangential; but the prospects are bleak because the stock of performers is not regenerating itself; but lo! some communities do involve their youth; but that may not continue since the conditions that stimulate youth involvement are being undermined... Where is the bottom line? I will conclude by trying to draw it more clearly.

Looking just at the present moment, I believe the regional arts of Indonesia are in much better shape than is generally admitted. By which I
mean: it is still possible in many Indonesian societies, in the right place in the right season, to witness performances of arts that were developed in or appropriated by those societies, not externally imposed, and are intended for the pleasure, instruction, protection, or other purposes of the people of those societies, not for the entertainment or other purposes of outsiders. It is true that many of the genres reported in ethnographies from the colonial era have vanished, but many also remain; even some new ones have emerged. Most of the genres that exist today still serve their communities rather than (or, if they have been upgraded, as well as) external powers. Although a shift is discernible from ‘folk’, community-based arts to ‘popular’ ones based in urban centres and disseminated to the regions, one also sees popular genres reclaimed by rural communities.

At the same time, many forces are busily chipping away at this foundation: the government’s programmes to make the arts respectable; its efforts to turn them into instruments for national development; tourism’s desire to make them attractive to transient visitors; the cassette industry’s need to convert them into product; the patronizing and belittling attitudes of government and media towards rural society and its pursuits.

But these forces are not without opposition. Neither the government as a whole nor Depdikbud is a monolithic entity, and there are officials, at high and low levels, who reject the idea of upgrading and oppose the view that the primary function of the arts is to serve the government; there are also those who, on no broader principle than solidarity or nostalgia, work to maintain the arts of their own society. And there is room for them to manoeuvre. As I have tried to show, government policy for the arts is founded on an ambiguous and self-contradictory constitutional formulation; it has been elaborated in the New Order with the hope that the arts can, in unspecified ways, be engineered to construct the New Indonesian; and in practice it serves mainly to enforce a vague standard of respectability. In conditions of such confusion and imprecision, there is great leeway in how individuals and local offices interpret and implement government policy.

Indonesians have started to discuss publicly the negative effects of policy and tourism on the regional arts. The article by Koentjaraningrat (1992) and the speech by Sedyawati (1994), both mentioned earlier, are noteworthy in that they question the basic assumption, expressed in the Constitution and elaborated by Dewantara, that the government should be in the business of accepting and rejecting art forms. Complaints about the violence done to the arts by tourist promoters are heard in newspapers (for example, Haska 1992). A number of well-respected commentators have published articles criticizing arts development and recommending, in essence, that the improvers leave the arts alone (Kayam 1993; Murgiyanto, 1993; Suanda 1985, 1993).

Hope for the mitigation and moderation of policy rests, I believe, in these two counterforces, government officials unwilling to give the arts over
wholly to the uses of government and tourism, and public debate on the intent and consequences of government practice. It can be argued that these are weak reeds, unable to withstand the juggernaut of allied forces seeking to appropriate the regional arts. I would reply that even so, the future significance and value of the regional arts are not yet determined.

In the first place, as I have shown, appropriation can take place on an official plane and still not touch the arts where they live. Secondly, even if the regional arts should all be co-opted – thoroughly, not just officially – and converted into vehicles for Their Master’s Voice, there would always remain the possibility of subversion or renovation – illicit lyrics, disapproved repertoire, strategic wrong notes, startling tempos, incongruous instruments. And thirdly, most fundamentally: even if co-opted, the regional arts, to the extent that they employ techniques, idioms, and materials not found in the arts of the dominant culture, remain inherently oppositional. Not in a directly political sense, but conceptually: they declare that there are alternative ways to organize perception and experience. No matter how much the presentation and interpretation of, say, Central Javanese gamelan music have been altered to fit official purposes, its elements – the intervals in its scales, the structures of its compositions – are stubbornly independent.

I am not saying that there is no way to empty the regional arts of their inherent oppositionality. This can be achieved by altering the basic structural materials of the art to bring them into conformity with the dominant style. (Turn the teeming heterophony of *wor* into clean, precise unison, and *wor* ceases to offer an alternative to the standard model of musical behaviour.) However, for the government, this radical surgery has the negative effect of homogenizing the arts, reducing the artistic diversity that the government nominally seeks to maintain. For tourism also, the effect is undesirable, since that same diversity draws tourists. The recording industry, on the other hand, does benefit from this homogenization, which breaks down barriers to the circulation of the dominant style.

Neither am I saying that since the arts can bounce back and are oppositional anyway, no harm is done by upgrading or otherwise tailoring them to external needs. Much of their specific power and meaning, their character and complexity, may be diminished in the process of upgrading or other redesign.

What I am saying is that from the government’s point of view little is gained and much may be lost by trying to change the arts. Ultimately, even successful co-optation of the arts is futile, since the real target is never the arts themselves, but rather the dissatisfaction or nonconformity they express – and these do not disappear simply because they are denied expression. Moreover, they can usually find other means of expression: any medium, from music to clothing to colour to silence, can become
oppositional, no matter how bland or tame it was before.\textsuperscript{44} Would it not be more efficient, then, for the government to address directly the difficulties of equitably integrating disparate cultures, instead of seeking merely to control the symbolic expressions of cultural identity? Though they may be brought under control temporarily, those symbols remain constantly available for reinterpretation and reclamation.

If the final consequence of the changes promoted by the various forces is to weaken the importance of the regional arts to regional audiences, this will produce no significant benefit for either the government or tourism. Only the recording industry will benefit: instead of having to serve a multitude of incompatible local tastes, it can market Jakarta pop (along with imported varieties) throughout the country. Surely this is not the Indonesian national culture that Alisjahbana or Dewantara or the framers of the Constitution had in mind.

\textsuperscript{44} In this regard, see the overview of 'musics of struggle' by Seeger (1990) and the associated brief essays by Jacquelin C. Peters and Amy Horowitz.

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