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The years of living luxuriously
Identity politics of Indonesia's new rich

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Until recently, there were only two quick answers in Indonesia to the question of who constituted the rich. They were unequivocally Westerners and the Chinese. Occasionally one would include top government officials in the list, but at a tier lower than the previous two. Now there can be more diverse answers to the same question, with some hesitation and necessary qualifications. Before 1990 there were more or less fixed stereotypes of Westerners, the Chinese, and top government officials in Indonesian popular culture. Now their public images have undergone significant changes.

What follows is an examination of those changes. Obviously economic factors feature in the multiple causes, and diverse directions of these changes. Some consideration of the economic dimension is imperative. However, the bulk of this discussion is more a cultural analysis of economic power, than an economic analysis of cultures.

This chapter is therefore about cultural constructions of the rich, which may or may not come close to facts about the economically rich. Westerners and Chinese who personify the rich in Indonesian popular knowledge are cultural constructs. They are fictional. But like most fictional figures, they are neither totally misleading, nor fabricated from pure fantasy.[1] Like most fictional works, the popular cultural construction of Westerners and Chinese profiles in Indonesia conveys an important message; and so does the reconstruction of Indonesia's new rich in the 1990s. The qualifier 'new' in the designation of the new rich refers primarily to the first half of the 1990s which is marked by significant prosperity and changes to social identities and relations.

I will focus on lifestyle, including consumerism, as an important site for the contemporary work of culturally constructing, contesting and negotiating identities of the new rich. No social act such as human consumption takes place in a social vacuum. It always operates within specific historical settings and embodies historically specific constructions of time, space and social relations. It involves socially situated persons, relationships, passions, fears, desires and memories. No consumption takes place in a purely natural, biological, ahistorical universe. Eating a McDonald's hamburger in Los Angeles never means the same as eating 'the same thing' at the same moment in one of its counter-outlets in

Yogyakarta, supposedly the capital city of High Javanese Culture, or in Mahathir's Kuala Lumpur, or in Ho Chi Minh City.[2]

Consumption always makes a social statement, sometimes more and sometimes less than simply indicating the consumer's purchasing capacity and personal taste. Moreover, the messages that emanate from consumption practices may not have been intended by individual consumers. These messages become more important and complex in contemporary urban settings, where consumption increasingly transforms itself into 'consumerism' (significantly stylised acts of consumption), as a part of lifestyle. The boundary that separates consumption from consumerism is often blurred.

THE OLD RICH

A striking feature of Indonesian public discourse, especially before 1990, is a pervasive hostility towards the rich. This is by no means unique, but it is nonetheless important to recognise. Throughout much of Indonesia's modern history, the rich have almost always been regarded with suspicion. This is not to say that Indonesians are not keen on getting rich. The widespread negative image of the rich is probably an index of the poor's success in outwitting the rich within the cultural battle to establish a dominant narrative of their antagonistic relationship. Until the 1980s, there were as many as, if not more folk tales, anecdotes and modern works of fiction that ridiculed rather than praised the rich. A common theme in Indonesian narrative is the unhappy life of rich characters and the moral superiority of the poor.

It is telling that the popular identification of the rich has been with Westerners and Chinese, leaving aside sex, class, religion or urban-rural differences. To understand the contemporary reconstruction of the rich from 'old' to 'new', it is necessary to look at the main elements that constitute the public image of Westerners and the Chinese. In popular discourse, the effect counts much more than accuracy of facts. In Java, the vernacular word for Westerners is *Landa,* short for *Belanda* (Hollanders), the former colonial masters. All whiteskinned persons can be easily referred to as *Landa,* or more casually *Bule*.

There are also the so-called 'Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent'. In Java, the vernacular designation *Cina* refers to all Oriental-looking persons. More recently these have included resident or visiting Japanese and Koreans who, incidentally, are very wealthy. As in most acts of identification, the construction of stereotypes of the rich tells us about the object being identified as much as the identifying persona in a set of binary oppositions.

Unless indicated otherwise, the account below describes the common stereotypes in popular culture evident in everyday conversations in the streets, published cartoons, caricatures, comic strips, jokes, gossip or soap operas. It is a crude reproduction of already familiar cultural constructs. Like all folk tales, there are varied versions of these popular constructs. They are all anonymous and equally legitimate. They are also marked by prejudice and caricaturing.

Westerners are not just rich in the common view. More importantly they are considered to be essentially non-Indonesian, regardless of their actual citizenship. They are uniformly modern, and are seen as carriers of the modernising spirit into Indonesian social life. They are expected to be unable to speak Indonesian properly, despite frequent cases to the contrary, and are believed to be Christians. As the carriers of superior civilisation, high technology and modernity, they are looked up to culturally. The *Landas* who exist in the popular mind are primarily those appearing in Hollywood movies and television soap operas. Their images are reproduced most visibly in advertisements, films and other entertainment industries. Morally, however, they are regarded with suspicion. The *Landa* are notorious for their liberalist, individualist and materialistic dispositions.[3]

Although many Indonesians have seen or heard of poverty-stricken Chinese families, in popular discourse *Cina* generally refers to tycoons such as Liem Sioe Liong, Bob Hasan and Ciputra (McBeth and Hiebert 1996). In New Order Indonesia the existence of this ethnic minority has come to prominence only on badminton courts and in commerce. They may be called fellow citizens, but are seen to constitute a distinct category as 'non-indigenous' Indonesians. The ethnic Chinese are generally known to believe in Confucianism, Buddhism or Christianity, but significantly not Islam which is the faith of the majority of the population. Worse than the Westerners, the Oriental-looking Indonesians are not only morally questionable. They are also seen as ideologically threatening and culturally unattractive.

Sino-Indonesians are indiscriminately considered rich and notoriously industrious, but also cunning and stingy. In the common stereotyped image, they have the worst taste in culture and aesthetics. Socially they may have strong in-group feelings, but politically they seem to have no patriotism. Regarded as being sympathetic towards Communism, they have been deprived of representation in successive state cabinets and formal political activity. Until very recently they never appeared on print media covers, talk shows or popular entertainment, except on rare occasions as minor foils to the protagonists. Periodically these people have been the easy target of public scolding, blackmailing and violence during mass riots.

The elite among New Order government officials may or may not be as rich as Westerners or Chinese Indonesians, but they enjoy the most comfortable position among the country's rich. Despite their extraordinary social and material privileges, these state agents and their families encounter less scrutiny from the general public. Though their wealth does not always escape criticism and hostile comment, they enjoy special exemption by virtue of being indigenous Indonesians and formal representatives of the nation-state. These state agents may be poorly trained professionals, and their rural backgrounds may impede their acquisition of fashionable taste. Nonetheless, the poor majority see these officials as belonging to the same group as themselves and as providing achievable models for their offspring.

In the dominant public discourse, the majority of Indonesians are stereotypi cally 'indigenous', Muslim, and come from rural backgrounds, but they are also seen as making impressive adjustments in the fast-changing world to which they are subjected. As in many 'developing countries', there is a prolific romanticisation of the 'people' (*rakyat*) in contemporary Indonesia. *Rakyat* represents an affectionate depiction of the innocent, morally superior, economically unprivileged but politically sovereign figures who often suffer from injustice inflicted by the rich and powerful.

While I do not claim these popular stereotypes to be truthful or even accurately represented, neither are they totally wrong, innocently fabricated, nor aimlessly reproduced. Despite their fictional status, such stereotypes illustrate, par excellence, a case of a dominant cultural construction of the rich—a construction that is never totally controlled by the economically powerful elite.

PRESSING AGENDA OF THE NEW RICH

Something fundamental in public life is now being transformed by the recent influx of wealth into the region. A central message in the dominant discourse about Indonesia's economy until the 1980s was that 'the rich are anything but us, Indonesians', and that 'we Indonesians are many things, but not rich'. The rich were non-Asian, or non-indigenous, non-Muslims, and *non-rakyat*.

Since the 1990s things have changed. The motto of the day has become 'it is cool to be rich'. Significant numbers from within the old Indonesian 'self' have improved their economic position. Two social groups that have assumed outstanding status in the public eye, as a consequence of their new wealth, can be called the new middle class and the indigenous Muslim elite. Other social identities, such as urban professional women, made their presence clear. However, their emergence has not reached the high level of significance of the other two categories. Space limitations prevent a special discussion on these newly emerging female groups. Suffice it to say that women play a significant role within the growing identity politics of the middle class and Muslim elite, and we will take into account their role in those non-gendered categories.

For similar reasons, it will not be possible to devote special discussion to the new poor, or the underclass more generally. The recent economic boom in the region has not only enlarged the wealth of nations, it has also widened the gap between the haves and have-nots, and deepened their mutual antagonism. Suffice it to acknowledge here that industrial workers and the urban underemployed have developed into important social groups. From time to time they have contested mainstream discourses of the status quo, the new rich, and economic disparity.[4]

Like most success stories of capitalism in Asia, the new rich in Indonesia encounter a serious problem of lacking moral support from the general public. Industrial capitalism has grown vigorously, but without the supplement of a strong capitalist ideology that renders capitalist social relationships as normal, rational and just. From the beginning, capitalism has been a dirty word. While most

Indonesians want to be rich, only a few have attained the desired position and they endure the stigma and discomfort of being regarded with suspicion.

In the 1990s the new rich are under greater pressure than ever before to protect and legitimise private ownership of substantial wealth. Negotiating or reconstructing the already dominant images of wealth, wealth-making and the wealthy becomes a serious project. They must seek ways to secure their dominant position on a long-term basis, and to maintain the broader social order that laid the foundation of their dominance. This security, however, cannot be achieved simply by constant concealment of wealth, denial of wealthiness or incessant retreat from luxurious lifestyles.

Like everyone else in a similar position, the new rich need convenient ways to exercise their economic power and enjoy the material privileges available to them beyond the economic arena. And they must do this in the face of obvious envy and resentment from the poor masses. These problems require confidence, creativity and experimentation. One social space where these experimentations take place is lifestyle. However, in the course of their development, particular lifestyles can move far beyond the rational calculation, modern economic principles or ideology that informed the initial agenda.

Indeed, to speak of contemporary lifestyles among the new rich merely as a necessary route to a higher level of dominance does not go far from political economism. Irrationality is occasionally at work in the desire for pleasure in consumption. It is more socio-psychological than economically motivated or rationally calculated. 'What is the point of being a capitalist, an entrepreneur, a bourgeois', Immanuel Wallerstein reminds us, 'if there is no personal reward?' (1991:146). He asserts that although the logic of capitalism demands abstemious puritanism, the psycho-logic of capitalism calls for a display of wealth and conspicuous consumption (1991:148).

Many observers agree that the emergence of a new bourgeoisie in Indonesia is more a product of political patronage than of market competition, successful rational planning or hard work.[5] It is not a surprise, therefore, that a large portion of the abundant fruit of the economic boom goes into excessive consumerism rather than productive investment. What comes easily, goes away easily. The new preoccupation of the emerging Indonesian capitalists is no longer how to get rich and sustain wealth, but how to maximise enjoyment and expand the scope of what money can buy. Among some of the most successful young professionals too, consumption has gone beyond the logic of utility or economy (*Kompas* 1995b).

The rest of this chapter will focus on some of the most salient directions of meanings in contemporary Indonesian consumer culture. We will begin with two distinguishable social clusters: middle-class intellectuals and the new bourgeoisie in their mutually reinforcing effort to build a new bourgeois hegemony through culturalisation.

THE NEW MIDDLE CLASS: TOWARDS A BOURGEOIS HEGEMONY?

The notorious conceptual confusion over the term 'middle class' has been widely recognised and well documented, and permits no easy resolution.[6] Here, the term is used primarily because its Indonesian equivalent, *kelas menengah,* has been central in contemporary discourse, referring to a segment of the new rich. We employ the problematic term in the popular sense, variously referring to the well-educated, economically better-off urbanites, with structural occupations ranging widely from the petty bourgeoisie to intellectuals, artists, middle-ranking bureaucrats and managerial or technical professionals. More often than not, these people use the term *kelas menengah* to identify themselves. Significantly, as elsewhere, the middle class in Indonesia has been described as the main agent of contemporary consumer culture and lifestyle. Such a broad and culturalist description can be seriously problematic, but for our purposes it will suffice.

It is impossible to discuss the growth of the Indonesian new middle class in isolation from those designated with other categories of the country's new rich (Muslims, Chinese or Westerners). Partly this is due to the fact that actual individuals shift between, or belong to more than one of, these categories, and partly to the fact that the formation of one category has implications for the others. Nevertheless, the new middle class is not always reducible to these alternative categories and needs to be considered separately.

One major characteristic of the new middle class that distinguishes this category from other groups identified among the new rich is its highly cosmopolitan outlook and activities. While cosmopolitanism denationalises, de-ethnicitises and secularises social categories, in practice it also frequently reinforces class structuration. As Yoon (1991:128) observes, Indonesia's economic dynamics are revitalising 'a new capitalist class'. Strong cosmopolitanism alone, if not class formation, has made a fundamental impact on the previously entrenched imagination of social groupings in terms of such categories as East/West, Muslim, women or indigenous Indonesians. It is important to stress, however, that while a cosmopolitan consumer culture is of primary significance in this recasting of social imagination, it is more than merely about class politics.[7]

The formation of a new middle-class identity and the parallel establishment of a capitalist hegemony in contemporary Indonesia operate on several fronts. First, through intellectual debates, there is a fairly overt advocacy of liberalism, pro-market sentiment and private property. Secondly, of equal importance, the state has enacted a series of economic measures, both token and sincere, to redress grievances over the alarming economic imbalance in financial assistance, loans and corporate partnerships. Thirdly, and more curiously, is the recently popular and unprecedented trend among top business figures to read poetry and sing popular songs specifically prepared for performance in serious public gatherings.

Yoon (1991) has already recorded a fairly detailed history of the first two of these developments in the period up to 1990. More than updating the

continued trend, the following paragraphs indicate the remarkable progress that these campaigns have achieved. A recent event of major significance in the struggle for capitalist hegemony in the economic field is the Jimbaran Declaration, an official accord signed by Indonesia's 96 biggest businessmen in a government-sponsored meeting in Jimbaran, Bali, 24–7 August 1995. The document announces renewed commitments by those business people to assist the less successful in the fight against the wealth gap. Many Indonesian observers, however, commented sceptically that real benefits for the needy were more urgent than promises. Some even demanded a broader and fundamental transformation of the overall economic system.[8]

As mentioned earlier, 'capitalism' has been a dirty word in Indonesia throughout much of the twentieth century. It is used mainly for demonisation by all sections of the population, despite their being bitterly antagonistic to each other on other matters. It was thus remarkable that early in 1995 one of the most respected intellectuals in the country, Kwik Kian Gie, openly applauded the merits of capitalism. In one of his regular columns for the Jakarta-based *Kompas,* Kwik (1995) made this extraordinary remark: [9]

> liberalism as well as capitalism are all fine, by no means do they contradict *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution... Therefore, it is okay if we overtly state that the liberalisation we are espousing at present implies liberalism, after all liberalism is in accord with *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution. Likewise it is okay to say openly that the triumphant success of the private enterprise today is the materialisation of capitalist doctrines, after all capitalism conforms with *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution.[10]

Just a week earlier, Christianto Wibisono (1994), Director of the Centre of Indonesian Business Data, and Kwik's close associate, wrote in the same daily that liberalism 'put into practice the soul and spirit of *Pancasila*'. In this sense, Wibisono adds, 'by conducting a modern reformation of liberalism', Europe, the United States of America and Japan have already become 'true *Pancasilaists* by putting into practice' the major tenets of what is known as P4 (*Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila*—Guidelines for the Comprehension and Implementation of *Pancasila*), a virtual state indoctrination programme.

Both Kwik and Wibisono had already attracted Yoon Hwan-Shin's attention a decade earlier when they spoke mildly in defence of capitalism. Yoon is one of the first scholars to help us recognise the insistent attempts on the part of the urban middle class to create capitalist ideology and culture in post-1980 Indonesia (1991). He noted how non-economic forces emanating from the state and intelligentsia were active in promoting a liberal, market-oriented economic system and ideology. Yoon correctly assessed the impressive success of this politico-cultural effort.[11]

This success would not be possible without a more balanced racial representation of economic dominance in Indonesia, or an appearance of something to that effect. Thus, one can understand the long and steady phasing-

out of anti Chinese sentiment in official public discourse, and the state's continual withdrawal from the nation's economy as private enterprise moved progressively to centre stage.[12] Indeed, in the past few years controversies have focused more consistently on the enormous privileges enjoyed by the President's children and grandson, for instance in the clove industry, beer levy and first national carindustry (see McBeth 1996; Schwarz 1994:133–61). One should neither overemphasise the change, nor be sure of how long this development will last. Undoubtedly anti-Chinese sentiments are still alive, and will continue to be in many years to come.

Nonetheless, it has been remarkable how such sentiments have been toned down, repressed from public expression, or confined to private communication and anonymous pamphlets during the last decade or so. There were local incidents involving the expression of anti-Chinese and anti-Christian sentiments in Central and East Java from late 1995 to the to time of this writing in early 1997. But the public discussions and media coverage of these events have too often overemphasised racial and religious aspects.[13] More instructive are the statements made in the hundreds of student demonstrations and publications since 1989. While capitalism has been their longstanding target, in no single instance have they been reported to have attacked the ethnic Chinese in their banners, posters or chants, in contrast to previous decades. The workers' demonstration in Medan in 1994 has often been described as an anti-Chinese riot but, as I have argued elsewhere, such description is seriously misleading (Heryanto 1994 and 1998).

CULTURALISATION OF THE NEW RICH

Almost without exception, observers of Indonesia have been condescending in their discussions of consumer culture lifestyles. They all view the practices of the new rich as simply hedonistic. Although there is some truth in the negative remarks, the empirical evidence to support this old argument is increasingly problematic. Some of what will be described below might be said to be universal of the *nouveaux riches*. Nonetheless, the Indonesian new rich deserve close scrutiny here, both because of their newness and their particular contexts. Empirical details are imperative. Below I describe a new preoccupation of some individuals from the top layers of the new rich.

Poetry reading for the public has always been popular in Indonesia. In the mid-1980s, for example, it cost a Semarang-based organising committee 10 million rupiah to invite Rendra, the nation's most celebrated dramatist and poet, to read ten poems at the city stadium.[14] In the 1990s something novel has happened: segments of the new rich have themselves taken on the joy of public poetry reading. The 1991 commemoration of Independence Day was probably a major starting point of this new tradition. The person who was responsible for this and similar subsequent events was retired Major-General Syaukat Banjaransari, a former military secretary to President Suharto. In that meeting the nation's notable poets read their poems on stage, interspersed with readings by the nation's biggest tycoons such as Liem Sioe Liong, William Suryajaya, Ciputra and Mrs Siti

Hardijanti Rukmana (the President's oldest daughter). Joining the event were top government officials such as Co-ordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, retired Admiral Sudomo, Minister of Education and Culture, Fuad Hassan, and leading figures of the Parliament, such as Vice-Chairman Naro, General Chairman of the ruling party Golkar, would-be Parliamentary Chairman, Wahono, and State Secretary Moerdiono (*Bernas* 1991). Apparently impressed by the event, several print media reprinted photographs of individuals reading poetry from that event in their reporting of other occasions (for example, *Tiara* 1991a, 1991b).

Since then public poetry reading by big business people and state officials has become popular in privately run radio stations, while the print media have invited them to write poems for their publications. On the national Mother's Day, 20 December 1993, another major poetry reading was held, featuring several tycoons, top state officials, Islamic leaders and military elite. Bearing more cultural weight than the 1991 meeting, this public performance took place at Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta's most prestigious arts centre. Ironically, many of the poems composed by the performers themselves were full of sharp criticism of misconduct by the Indonesian new rich. One exception was Minister of Labour, Abdul Latief's poem, 'Tanda Cintaku Padamu Mama' ('Token of My Love to You, Mama'), which recalls his mother's words of wisdom: 'You must get rich/So that you can help the poor/The poor cannot possibly help their lot...' (*Panji Masyarakat* 1994).

Feeling pleased with the various experiments in the previous years, Major General Syaukat Banjaransari prepared a similar event for the golden anniversary of the nation's independence in August 1995. As before he invited business accomplished professional poets (*Kompas* 1995g). Another event took place on 17 January 1996 at the Jakarta Arts Hall, where state ministers, businessmen, jourpeople, members of the newly appointed state cabinet, top military officers and nalists, movie directors and retired military officers participated (*Kompas* 1996c).

It should be emphasised that these events were intended to be taken very seriously and were prepared specifically to feature members of the new rich.[15] No doubt, some participants took the affairs more seriously than others. The same can be said about those new rich whose prime interests are in music or painting. Rather than simply patronising big concerts or art exhibitions, which they do, new rich individuals commonly take high profiles as newborn artists. Some demonstrate their musical talents in prestigious public or professional settings, while others have participated proudly in a whole new era of painting exhibitions and art criticism (*Kompas* 1995b).[16]

However, these new trends do not go without challenge and cynicism from the general public. In the Jakarta-based news magazine *Forum Keadilan,* a reader from Kalimantan wrote an open letter, welcoming the new poetry-reading tradition, but protesting against the use of certain venues normally devoted to distinguished artists (see Ganie 1995). In Semarang, the capital city of Central Java, collective poetry reading by known poets, military and police officers, and businessmen provoked polemics in the local daily, *Suara Merdeka* (Utomo 1995; *Suara Merdeka* 1995a; Saparie 1995; Set 1995).

Participants in the new trend are fully aware of the public's mixed reactions. In response to the sceptics, two strategies have been adopted. The first is to reject any attempt to label these activities as mere fads. When Minister of Transmigration, Siswono Yudohusodo organised a poetry reading with his colleagues from the ministry, along with selected artists and politicians, it was necessary to demonstrate a serious engagement with the aesthetic. This was emphasised in a front-page *Kompas* report which opens with a sympathetic sigh on the difficulty of being a bureaucrat. If s/he reads poetry at a time when poetry reading has become trendy, it says, others are quick to doubt their sincerity (Tejo 1995). The second strategy is to write a history of individuals' artistic talent, proving that these various professionals, business people and bureaucrats have already devoted themselves to music or poetry long before the current fashion (see *Tiara* 1991b, 1991c, 1992; *Tiras* 1995b).

Having noted this, it remains necessary to examine contemporary consumer culture beyond any rationally calculated 'logic of late capitalism' or class politics.[17] Consumer culture and the pursuit of luxury certainly complement capitalist production. In the West, the elevation of a luxuriously stylised life involved what Immanuel Wallerstein calls 'aristocratization of the bourgeoisie' (1991:139). Consumer culture in the life of the Indonesian new middle class implies a public statement to the effect that being rich is now 'cool and necessary'.[18] However, the stylisation of life can take on a life of its own. Featherstone's understanding of the 'new petite bourgeoisie' is highly relevant in examining the urban middle classes in Indonesia, as in many other Asian countries: 'Here it is not a question of...a particular style, but rather...a general interest in style itself, the nostalgia for past styles, ...in the latest style, ...subject to constant interpretation and reinterpretation' (1991:91).

After a few years of experiments, several Jakarta-based glossy magazines (*Matra, Tiara* and *Jakarta-Jakarta*) found solid ground in the 1990s by devoting themselves exclusively to the newly desired lifestyles. Like all other social constructs, the new identities embedded in these lifestyles must be acquired through an extended learning. With the new trend, one is trained to be 'constantly self-consciously checking, watching and correcting' oneself (Featherstone 1991:90). The areas and objects of learning are virtually limitless: from ideal body size and shape, to health, sex, eating, drinking, speech, clothing, accessories, technological gadgets and choice of leisure, entertainment and shopping.

ASIANISATION OF ASIA: GOOD BUY, THE WEST[19]

Since colonial times, the West has been a fascinating model for lifestyling and consumer desire in Asia. The West continues to attract Asians during the current years of prosperity, so that consumerism and Westernisation have often been considered one and the same thing. However, we need to make two

qualifications about the current 'Western' elements that go with Indonesia's consumer culture in the 1990s.[20]

First, what constitutes the West, the East, and their relationships has become vague, if not meaningless. This is partly a consequence of the second qualification: in devouring things 'Westernised', contemporary Asians reassert and remodify their new selfhood. Both render the common nativism and empiricism in most discussions about consumer culture embarrassingly naive and obsolete. The notion of Asianisation of Asia has become popular in response to this confusing problem. But this popular phrase can be deceitful. There is no Asia, let alone Asianisation without the West and Westernisation. East and West have always constituted each other. In contemporary consumer culture their mutually embedded relationships become glaringly evident. In isolation, East and West become increasingly empty signifiers.

Yao Souchou (1995) notes the paradox in the McDonald's televised advertisement to Singaporeans. The fast-food restaurant that has become 'the most blatant American cultural export' is now transformed into something quite the opposite: Singaporean nationalism.

> One ad begins with the title: 'The Sounds of Singapore', and from the first scene one sees that it is designed to rouse nationalistic sentiments. The bright-eyed [Oriental-looking] school children are outdoors with the school flag being raised under the blue tropical sky. They sing their allegiance to Singapore: 'When the sun shines upon our land.'
>
> (Yao 1995:00)

During the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan in 1996, Surabaya's McDonald's distributed a complimentary piece of *ketupat* (rice cooked in coconut leaf, traditionally consumed during this fasting month) for every Rp. 1,000 its clients spent (*Jawa Pos* 1996).

Consumption of things Westernised still runs high. What is somewhat new, however, is how new rich Asians aggressively objectify the West in the form of commodities at their disposal. Occasionally one still hears the old anti-Western rhetoric, especially among defensive state bureaucrats in the context of human rights debate. It is now clear that the rhetoric appeals to fewer and fewer young Asians. Instead of continuing to regard the West as a major threat, or simply an object of obsessive idolisation, more and more Asians regard many Western things as pliable resources, and Westerners as equals. One area that illustrates this quite clearly is the (mis-)use of English.

Over the twentieth century, English has been important in Indonesia and most Asian countries. In the 1980s it was fairly common to see Indonesians striving to learn the language, showing off their skills, and materially benefiting from a mastery of the language. Now Indonesian urbanites are more exposed to the language, many through greater access to international travel, and they are more fluent in it. While mastery of the language still engenders some prestige, there is

also a new fashion of wordplay, called *plesetan*. *Plesetan* has different variants. One of them involves creating funny names and idiomatic expressions by twisting English words. While Japanese and South Korean never rival English, some *plesetan* makes use of both familiar or non-existent Japanese-and South Korean-sounding words. It is significant that the target of *plesetan* is only those foreign languages belonging to the politically and economically most powerful nations.[21]

Reviewing the details of the new rich's recent ventures in consumer culture can be entertaining. However, such a lengthy account would contribute limited insight to the present study. Thus I will limit myself to one case: the new trend in hosting international pop music stars. Until the late 1970s, Western pop music stars mainly existed, for their Indonesian middle-class fans, through audio recordings, movie screens, posters, news-magazines and fantasies. In the 1990s, however, hardly any Western music stars escaped the more direct embrace of Indonesia's new rich.[22] None could see and appreciate the change better than those in their late forties and over, who still played the oldies in the 1990s and welcomed Cliff Richard in Jakarta on 17 March 1995 to celebrate the launching of the luxurious 'Legend City' real estate.

Clearly tickets to these and other such shows were expensive, even to average middle-class Jakartans.[23] They were largely financed by top government officials, or their children, who competed with each other as hosts for the more prestigious artists. Some even offered more than the standard fee to outdo their rivals. 'As for the ticket sales, they made big business people or their parents' relations purchase the *ticket fait accompli*' (*Forum Keadilan* 1994a). Franz Harry's magic show in October 1992 failed to attract an audience, as a result of a competing David Copperfield show in the city a month earlier. The concert in Jakarta of Bryan Adams in December 1993 did not succeed because it had to compete with others by Julio Iglesias, Andy Williams and Sergio Mendes.

Earlier I noted how Asia's economic growth is becoming more and more self-sufficient, rendering the rest of the world less relevant. Without implying any direct causal relationship, one can see something similar taking place in the area of culture. There is now a growing pride and interest among Asians in their traditional cultural heritage. This extends to an expanding industry devoted to rediscovering, reinventing and manufacturing exotic and traditional ethnic cultures of Asia.[24]

Asianisation of Asia means different things to different people. We have seen Asian state bureaucrats launching xenophobic 'Asian Values' in response to American-led international debates on human rights after the Cold War. Among the young urban new rich in Asia, the aphorism can mean Asian ethnic cuisine, holiday travel to exotic Asian resorts, and air-conditioned Asian houses, decorations and accessories. However, the distinction is not simply bureaucrat *vis-à-vis* yuppy. Recently the local government of Ujung Pandang, South Sulawesi, decided to renovate the old Chinese ghetto and to turn it into a tourist destination, a first ever Chinatown in Indonesia (*Kompas* 1995j).

In any case, the new interest in Asian cultures among Asians cannot be considered natural. Neither can it be seen as a new trend or uniquely Asian. It is

not totally separable from the past and present experience of the West's othering of Asians. In fact one is tempted to think that at the bottom of the Asianisation of Asia is a recuperation of Westerners' colonial orientalism. Sociologist Chua Beng Huat described the phenomenon as a process where sections of the Southeast Asian middle class become 'post-colonial', as distinct from their past 'de-colonised' relationship with the West.[25]

This is not a case where rich Asians have had enough of consuming Western cultures, and have rediscovered Asia for want of something new and more exotic beyond Hollywood and Disneyland. Rich and Western-educated Asians who still find the West attractive can easily share interest with the West in exploring—and either intentionally or not, reconstructing—the wonder of Asia's past. Both colonial and post-colonial Westerners are well known for their long and uninterrupted history of discovering and manufacturing the exotic beauty and mysteries of the East. Instead of simply mimicking their former colonial masters from an inferior position, the new rich in Asia have now become new masters of, and on, their own soils. This means both Asianising Asia and Westernising the Asian taste for Asia. The East-West dichotomy comes to an end, although the more complex nuanced differences between the two signifiers continue to appeal to many of us.

RETURN OF THE DRAGON

Several points in the foregoing discussion have indicated social changes that involved Chinese Indonesians. These include the new interest in Asian Values and ethnicities, the participation of Chinese tycoons in poetry reading, the intellectual advocacy of liberalism and the formation of a multiracial capitalist class in the nation's economy. All of these developments help to refurbish the legitimacy of this ethnic minority.

This is evident in three major areas: first, the decline of public hostility towards the Chinese and the easing of restrictions against their activities; secondly, the presentation of certain Chinese individuals as successful Indonesian fellow citizens in areas other than those traditionally allotted to them; thirdly, and most significantly, the reassertion of blatantly Chinese ethnicity into public culture (see Heryanto 1998).

Now, more than a decade has passed in New Order Indonesia since there were any major anti-Chinese riots. By 'major' riots I mean racial/ethnic-based mass violence that lasts for a week or more, and which is linked across a number of towns or cities. There were a number of separate 'minor' riots in East and Central Java in 1995, and there was major unrest in Medan in 1994. These were not just focused on the Chinese. The last major anti-Chinese riot was in 1980. Under the new circumstances it is not difficult to understand the easing of old restrictions against Chinese cultural artefacts. Two examples illus trate the point, one concerning language, the other celebration of the Chinese New Year.

Chinese characters and utterances have been illegal since the birth of New Order Indonesia in 1966; and so have all Chinese schools, mass organisations and

mass media. Visitors entering Indonesia are informed on the customs declaration form that Chinese medicine and printed materials in Chinese characters fall in the same category of illegal items as pornography, arms or narcotics. This is probably one of the extremely rare cases in modern history where a major world language is officially proscribed, without protest, by a strong government in a relatively long and stable political climate.[26]

However, the 1990s are witnessing rapid change. Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng visited Indonesia in 1990, following a series of exchange visits by officials from the two governments. Not long afterwards, the two governments founded the Chinese-Indonesian Institute for Economic, Social and Cultural Cooperation. While the bans on the use of Chinese language and characters have not been repealed, in 1994 the Indonesian government sponsored the publication of a Chinese-Indonesian dictionary and allowed hotels and travel agents to publish leaflets and brochures in Chinese characters (*Kompas* 1994a).

The year before Li Peng visited Indonesia, the government banned the staging of a play in the North Sumatra city of Medan on the official pretext that the story originated from a Chinese legend, *Sam Pek Eng Tay,* which was incompatible with the national personality. Unlike similar incidents in the past, the ban angered the general public. In 1993 both the Central Government and the Governor of Central Java reminded the public of the ban on the celebration of Chinese New Year in public places, like vihara (Buddhist temples), and on the performance of the dragon dance. The Governor even banned the sale of a certain Chinese cake, traditionally consumed at New Year. Again, for the first time, critical responses to the restrictions appeared in the mass media (Indrakusuma 1993; Subianto 1993).

On the following Chinese New Year, the largest Indonesian daily, *Kompas,* published large advertisements conveying good wishes for the Chinese Holiday Season. This provoked no one. The issue came into sharper relief in 1996 and again in 1997 when Chinese New Year fell one day before Muslim *Idul Fitri*. Most national media gave equal coverage to the big Holidays despite the Jakarta Governor's reiteration of the ban.[27]

What took place was not a sweeping improvement of inter-ethnic relations; rather the pattern has been contradictory and inconsistent. One may speculate that anti-Chinese sentiments survive like still water that runs deep. But no culture is like nature. What is historically significant is that it is the first time in many decades that the old sentiment has not seriously asserted itself in public.

More important is the elevation of high-profile individuals of Chinese ethnic identity into the arena of popular culture as prominent Indonesian citizens, and the reinsertion of blatantly Chinese cultural artefacts into the same public space. One of Indonesia's most popular novels, a highly rated television show and a highly acclaimed play produced at Jakarta's most prestigious arts centre in 1994 were all based on the Chinese legend *The Lady White Snake*. The banned dragon dance played an important part in all these versions of the narrative. Televised film series based on Chinese legends have not only been screened, but they occasionally outnumber other film series. Comics and novels featuring Chinese legends now

occupy a considerable space in all major bookshops. These are only a few examples of the reinsertion of a Chinese presence into the nation's multiethnic cultural arena.

If Chineseness appears to be more acceptable in public, it is little wonder more and more accomplished ethnic Chinese now appear in high-profile positions outside the business world and badminton court, without any reference to their ethnic origin. Some names that came to prominence recently include: Nano Riantiarno (theatre), Jaya Suprana (humour, cartoon, piano), the late Prajudi Admodirdjo (clothes design), Kwik Kian Gie (politics), Dede Oetomo (Gay movement and AIDS-awareness campaign), Agus Dermawan T. (art criticism), Andy Siswanto (architecture), Putri Wong Kam Fu (astrology), and most recently Alifuddin El Islamy (Islam proselytising).

Several uncertainties remain. Given past hostilities, we do not know how solid, fragile or long-lasting is this new inter-ethnic friendliness. It is difficult to gauge whether it represents simply the acceptance of an ethnic minority that has undergone a long history of social stigmatisation as a result of its economic dominance, or whether we are witnessing a profoundly new phenomenon. Are we dealing with the attribution of new meanings to ethnicity, ethnicisation and ethnic politics, at a time when a good number within the urban multi-ethnic middle class take a comfortable life for granted? These changes seem to reflect an era characterised by sustained economic growth and political stability, not only in one country but in the whole region.[28] The next section provides an even stronger case of a 'new' identity politics, in which religion features as a central signifier.

'NEW' MUSLIMS

No identity politics in contemporary Indonesia has been as spectacular as that involving the transformation of Islamic communities. The newly established, government-sponsored *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (ICMI—Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals) has taken a lead in the most visible developments, and leading functionaries within ICMI occupy positions in the current state cabinet. However, ICMI is only part of a bigger story in which Islam provides a contemporary inspiration for the lifestyles of the new rich.

Not all prominent Muslim figures and their followers are happy with the establishment of ICMI, yet none doubt Islam's recent dramatic ascendancy. Those within ICMI applaud the development and point out that this is the first time in New Order Indonesia that Islam has been accorded considerable social respect and political clout in the formal political arena (Hefner 1993:23).[29] The post-1990 rise of Islam to Indonesia's centre stage may continue to be a signifi cant factor in the course of the country's immediate future. Whatever lies ahead, the scope and style of this contemporary 'Islamisation' have now gone far beyond anyone's imagination in the 1980s.

Since 1966 'Communism' has been regularly referred to as a potential threat, and hundreds of thousands of citizens were deprived of civil rights for alleged

sympathy with the bygone Indonesian Communist Party. Nevertheless, in the 1970s and 1980s, Islam was the government's primary target of repression and stigmatisation. The notorious Anti-Subversive Law was most frequently used to prosecute individuals the New Order labelled as 'right extremists' (see TAPOL 1987).[30]

Social forces identified with Islam were also the chief targets of the controversial decree of 1985, which demanded that all organisations declare the state ideology *Pancasila* as the sole foundation of their constitutions. The same was true when the government launched the ambitious *Pancasila* indoctrination project, *Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila*.

By mid-1990 the scene was almost the complete reverse. Nothing seemed to rival Islam as a source of 'correct politics' among the elite. President Suharto went on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1991, just a few months after he officially inaugurated ICMI. In the next few years, courtrooms in Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Salatiga were packed with people watching defendants charged with making public statements disrespectful of Islam. Meanwhile prisoners, previously labelled 'right extremists', were released despite long sentences. The phenomenon was not restricted to politics and law.

A decade ago it was difficult for many ordinary Muslims to identify themselves as such for fear of being labelled 'right extremists'. Today the situation seems to have been reversed: in 1996, rioters attacked non-Muslim communities and buildings of worship. Yet these attacks were condemned by respected Muslim leaders.

At least up to the mid-1990s the rise of Islam had changed the nation's intellectual landscape. ICMI established the Center for Information and Development Studies (CIDES) in early 1993, following the already active Paramadina Foundation. Islamic schools developed not only in size, but also in quality and prestige. Some of them rank as the most expensive schools in Jakarta (*Femina* 1995c). Most bookstores in major cities have special sections on Islam or on various social issues written from an Islamic perspective. The publication of Islamic texts has reportedly boomed (*Berita Buku* 1996). In two years, ICMI's daily, *Republika,* reached a considerable portion of the national readership.

These changes occurred in parallel with developments of the most visible form, namely the construction of mosques and the practice of religious rituals. In 1993 Robert Hefner (1993:10) noted that the number of mosques in East and Central Java was suddenly almost double the number of twenty years earlier, while the number of Christian churches had increased only minimally.

More interesting than the increased number of mosques is the widespread and growing number of prayer halls in fancy office buildings, shopping centres, hotels and restaurants. Religious discussions take place on the Internet as well as in select homes in the wealthiest districts of Jakarta (*Femina* 1995b). Collective prayers, Ramadan-dining in fancy restaurants and Islamic education among top business executives, state bureaucrats, rock singers, movie stars and other celebrities have become regular cover stories in today's media industry (*Femina*

1996; *Forum Keadilan* 1996b; *Jakarta-Jakarta* 1996; *Sinar* 1996). Several segments of the booming real-estate business have offered 'Islamic real estate' in West Java for the better-off (*Tiras* 1995e). Following the opening of an Islamic Bank, there are now Islamic shopping markets in several cities in Java (*Suara Hidayatullah* 1996).

Islam and fashion find a most celebrated collaboration in the business of female Muslim (*Muslimah*) clothing. This development is even more remarkable when we consider that until 1990 there were strong restrictions against female Muslims wearing the Islamic veil. There were many cases where female students were punished for wearing Islamic costume, especially the veil, instead of the official school uniform. Several private employers discouraged female employees from doing the same. Under these circumstances, wearing the veil in general, and especially to school and work, was a statement of political protest.[31]

Since 1990, however, the first daughter of the President has seldom appeared in public without wearing the veil. While some scattered opposition to the new fashion continues, highly prestigious fashion shows have regularly—at least once a year during the Ramadan month—presented elaborate designs of Islamic women's clothing in five-star hotels.[32]

The intricate qualities of the new Islamic fashion warrant a separate study (see Surtiretna (1995) and *Ummat* (1996a)). Here I simply wish to emphasise three important points. First, this new fashion has engendered a big industry which promises to grow even bigger (see *Kompas* 1996b; Royani 1996). Second, far from being targeted simply as consumers of the new industry, women take a leading role in both the artistic design and commercial aspects (see, for example, *Kompas* 1995a). In the 1994 annual of 'Trends of Islamic Fashion' at Puri Agung Sahid Jaya Hotel, more female designers participated than their male counterparts. Most of these female designers devoted their careers exclusively to Islamic clothing (*Kompas* 1994a). Third, key figures in this new fashion industry repeatedly make unsolicited comments that they draw their design inspirations from international trends (often meaning the West) and not from the Arab world! This suggests an attitude parallel with the trends we discussed earlier about the Javanese *plesetan* and the creative consumption of other Western goods.[33]

Admissions by two designers in the 1996 annual Islamic fashion show in Jakarta are typical. Raizal Rais was proud to acknowledge that his work was inspired by Jackie Onassis, while Dimas Mahendra stated: 'I don't want my designs to look like the clothes of the Arabs, because Islam is not identical to Arab'. Instead he wanted to present an 'empire' (English in original) style (*Kompas* 1996a). Event choreographer Denny Malik made a strikingly similar remark. He adopted elements of ethnic Acehnese and Minangkabau dances, and stressed his attempt to turn away from the Arab: 'Islam doesn't have to be identical to Arabian culture...Islam doesn't have to be stiff and introvert...Islam doesn't have to look shaggy... I want to present something bright' (*Ummat* 1996b).

The same attitude dates back to the first series of the annual 'Trends in Islamic Fashion' in 1994. Then designer Anne Rufaidah explained openly to reporters that

Europe had become a major source of inspiration, albeit with local modification. Other cultural sources varied widely from Morocco to China and Pakistan (*Kompas* 1994a). Little wonder that the discourse of this new Islamic fashion is heavily indebted to European jargon. In a four-paragraph text, reporter Santi Hartono had to italicise these words: *siluet* (silhouette), *sexy, palazzo, bias cut, lace, crepe, viscose, royal blue, fuchsia, terracotta, chiffon* and *fashion* (*Tiara* 1994). Similar writing is found in *Femina* (1995a). No paragraph goes without italicised terms: 'tumpuk tiga piece...lengkap dengan *vest*...motif Toraja dibuat dengan teknik *stitching tie-dye*...kerudung dari bahan *chiffon*...Lapis luarnya berupa *vest* panjang... terdiri dari *blazer*.'

Islam and Islamisation have become a great deal more heterogeneous and complex, involving more actors and interests than anyone could have imagined before. Parts of it may be primarily about religious devotion. But other elements go beyond this and, in light of the above developments, it is fair to ask ourselves whether it is apt to describe the emergence of 'new' Muslims. This is not to suggest a new religion. It is to resist the easy temptation to reduce the phenomenon to the simple re-emergence of something old and familiar. This is to go beyond the common practice of labelling Indonesia's contemporary Islamisation no more than 'primordial' or 'sectarian' politics.[34]

Gone are the old and rigid meanings of 'religion' and 'politics', as well as the clear boundaries that separate them from 'lifestyle'. In today's Islam in Indonesia, old familiar images have been replaced by new ones. The associations of Islam with rural poverty religious dogmatism, the Middle East, anti-Chinese, anti-West sentiments, and with fundamentalists seeking to establish an Islamic state, are juxtaposed with new images. Now Islam is also associated with television talk shows, name cards with PhDs from prominent Western schools, erudite intellectual debates, mobile telephones and consumption of *ketupat* during Ramadan at McDonald's.

THE PAINS OF AGEING

The New Order government can proudly take credit for ushering in the prosperity that the Indonesian new rich enjoy. Ironically the same government has been undermined in the unfolding events it sponsored. After the continuous fall of oil prices in the world market in the 1980s, there was a steady retreat of the New Order government's involvement in the nation's economy. For much of the 1980s it flew the banner of privatisation. Though partly rhetorical, this was followed, in the subsequent years, by policies of deregulation, debureaucratisation, liberalisation and openness. Private (domestic and foreign) investments represented as much as 77 per cent of the state budget for the period of the 6th Five-Year Plan, 1994/5–1998/9 (*Kompas* 1995h). In 1994 Indonesia's 300 biggest conglomerates owned total assets worth nearly 70 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (*Forum Keadilan* 1995a). By 1995 the top 200 of these conglomerates were

responsible for 86 per cent of the nation's gross domestic product (*Jawa Pos* 1995), compared with 35 per cent in 1990 (*Kompas* 1995i).[35]

Nothing showed more clearly the declining position of the New Order than the Government Decree No. 20/1994. This decree allows 100 per cent foreign ownership of existing companies or new, locally based investments with only 1 per cent divestment after fifteen years of operation. Foreign investors are also invited to take 95 per cent ownership of enterprises in sensitive areas previously prohibited by the constitution, including ports, electricity, telecommunication, airlines, water, railways and mass media.

The government's retreat has not been confined to the nation's economic activities; similar moves are found in political (see Heryanto 1996b) and cultural areas. In the words of a foreign journalist:

> As the state has progressively loosened its control over the economy, status has come to depend increasingly on wealth and individual ability rather than one's position on the bureaucratic totem pole. The idols of urban society today are executives, while once-coveted careers in the civil service and armed forces now face recruitment problems.
>
> (Vatikiotis 1991:31)

Nearly 70 per cent of Jakartan middle-class respondents of a survey conducted by *Tiara* bluntly admitted that they wished to be successful businessmen. Half of them were admirers of prominent business people. One state-run high-school student had an ambition to be like 'Uncle Liem' Sioe Liong, the biggest Indonesian tycoon. His admiration was so high that he knew by heart all the names of members of Liem's family (*Tiara* 1991a).

There is little that the ageing New Order regime can do to contain the new public effervescent desire for pleasurable lifestyles. In an attempt to retain some of its old authority, the government launched a series of measures, including the 'Simple Life Pattern' (*Pola Hidup Sederhana*).[36] This campaign began with the Presidential Decree of 22 January 1974, officially aimed at civil servants and members of the armed forces.[37] Nonetheless, the restrictions were widely discussed in public as if to set the prescribed conduct for the whole population, with government officials and military officers acting as role models. Initially the decree was a response to the biggest yet student-led mass protest against economic disparity, and the economic dominance of Sino-Indonesian and foreign investors. As many expected, the campaign failed. It could not quell the wave of consumer culture that the same government was also partly responsible for.

Government invocation of the Simple Life slogan has fluctuated. It was mentioned in the 1983 State Broad Guidelines. It regained popularity in 1986 when the New Order suffered its biggest state budget cut. Its latest comeback was in mid-1993 when Minister for Reform of State Apparatus Major General Taipan Bernhard Silalahi made several public statements to express his concerns about the extravagant lifestyle among the Jakarta elite. When the Simple Life campaign

hit a few targets, the victims were always state officials. It was partly for this reason that the general public, including the new rich, never took the programme very seriously. They could always cite contrary cases, such as in the concluding months of 1995, when various local governments planned to spend sizeable amounts of money on office cars and for building an official guest-house and swimming pool.[38] In the most conspicuous practices to run counter to the official campaign, members of the first family appeared in the forefront.

A classic example of these apparent double standards relates to television commercials which were banned on 1 April 1981. The pretext of the ban was the government's paternalistic intention to protect the audience, especially the rural population and urban under-class, from the seduction of a consumer lifestyle advocated by the commercials. Indonesians saw no more television commercials until 1987 when Bambang Triatmodjo, the President's middle son, brought them back on his station, Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia, Indonesia's first privately owned television network (see Kitley 1992:75–8).

Luxury cars have always been in the top list of items targeted by the government's Simple Life policy. And yet proscribed vehicles have continued to be smuggled into the country (*Jakarta-Jakarta* 1993b:20–1). In 1993, this controversy re-erupted when the President's youngest son, Hutomo ('Tommy') Mandala Putra, was suspected of having been involved in the illegal imports. The charges were denied (*Jakarta-Jakarta* 1993b:16–17) and the issues were not pursued but suspicions remained. The following year, the media reported that Tommy had bought the famous Italian automobile factory Lamborghini, which produces luxury cars. Using a quote from Tommy as a provocative story title, the daily *Kompas* reported that the deal was conducted 'in order to uplift the nation's image' in the international arena (1994c).

CONCLUSION: THE POLITICS OF LIFESTYLE

Lifestyle and consumer culture have not simply occupied a larger slice of the nation's quantitative spending and public discourse. They have participated, to say the least, in the changing dynamics of the nation's social hierarchy, providing new profiles to the new rich, and modifying or undermining the profiles of others. Lifestyle has become a crucial site for the construction, negotiation and contestation of identity in Indonesia. At the centre of this new identity politics stand the new rich.

This conclusion runs contrary to the common argument among observers who see contemporary changes as having turned young middle-class radicals from political activists into consumer hedonists, or as one journalist dubbed it, 'from protests to parties' (*Asiaweek* 1995:64–5). The foregoing indicates that, under certain historical circumstances, going to parties, just like shopping or hanging out in shopping malls, can be as political as going to a polling station, engaging in parliamentary debates, wearing fashionable clothes or reading poetry.

Obviously, not all aspects of lifestyle are instructive of or relevant to identity politics. This chapter has selected elements of lifestyle change in contemporary Indonesia from a particular context and with a particular aim in mind. In exploring the political significance of contemporary lifestyles, I could not help but be conscious of the inclination among political analysts to share the mainstream practice of dismissing consumer culture as politically incorrect, or irrelevant. I hope I have not overreacted by giving the impression that identity politics in the cases discussed above is necessarily progressive or libertarian.

Economic changes are real and materially grounded. And so is wealth. However, the value and power of wealth are always socially constructed, reconstructed and deconstructed. And so is the cultural significance of owning wealth. They are never inherently material. They are never stable. The directions, constraints and dynamics that describe the changing value and power of wealth are neither fully random, nor universally law-governed.

Notes

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1 In 1995 Indonesia paid each working expatriate an average monthly salary 30,000 times higher than it did to each of its civil servants and military officers. About half of the 57,000 working expatriates in 1995 were Japanese and South Koreans. On the economic power of expatriates and local reaction, see *Forum Keadilan* (1996a) and Rachbini (1996). Between 70 per cent and 80 per cent of private economic activity is reported to be in the hands of Chinese Indonesians (Mackie 1994; Schwarz 1994). A proponent of economic indigenism suggested in 1994 that 18 of the 25 richest Indonesian conglomerates are of ethnic Chinese origin (Sjahrir 1994; see also Vatikiotis 1993:50; Suyanto 1994).
2 'In Asia,' wrote a columnist, 'if you own a Mercedes, you are held in awe. In Australia, you're seen as a pretentious peacock' (Amdur 1996). He may be right, but only partially and only at times. The precise meanings of owning a Mercedes are never as fixed and stable as Amdur implies.
3 For a recent analysis of a contemporary recycling of this prejudice in Indonesia, see Keith Foulcher (1990).
4 After years of persistent protests by workers, the government raised workers' minimum wage in 1993, 1995 and again in April 1996. Rather than seeking higher and fairer wage rates, thousands of workers in Java demonstrated over the refusal of employers to pay the official minimum wage. In the 1993/4 fiscal year, the sixth largest tax-paying individual earned 7,185 times the wages his employees were

supposed to receive (*Kompas* 1995d). I am thankful to Arief Budiman for bringing this report to my attention.

5 This may be a more common phenomenon world-wide than generally acknowledged, and not uniquely Indonesian.

6 On the conceptual problems of the so-called 'middle classes', see Abercrombie and Urry (1983) and Wright (1989). For a pioneering collection on contemporary East Asia, see Hsiao (1993). The first and only English-language book on the Indonesian middle class is Tanter and Young (1990). The term 'new rich' is not an easy substitute. First, it includes the (new) bourgeoisie which is distinguishable from what has commonly been referred to as the middle classes. Secondly, the term 'new rich' may carry unintended and inappropriate residual connotations of the *nouveaux riches* —characterised by a comfortable life with no 'true luxury and a certain awkwardness of social behaviour' (Wallerstein 1991:136). Robison and Goodman (1996) do not seem to convey this pejorative residual meaning of *nouveau riche* when speaking of Asia's new rich. But neither do they make an explicit distinction between the 'new rich' and the 'nouveaux riches'.

7 MacCannell and MacCannell (1993) offer one of the best attempts to juggle diverse and conflicting aspects of consumer culture.

8 See cover story of the news-magazine *Tiras* (1995a).

9 One month prior to the publication of Kwik's column, *Kompas* presented an editorial, assuring the population of the harmless nature of liberalisation (1994d). The basis of this argument was presented in the editorial title, 'Liberalisasi Perdagangan Bukan Berarti Liberalisme' ('Trade Liberalisation Does Not Mean Liberalism'), which had previously been disseminated by the country's elite. Even this moderate line of thinking received a rebuke from Rasuanto (1995). A sharper denunciation of Kwik's arguments came from Mubyarto (1995), an eminent Indonesian economics professor.

10 Translations from Indonesian to English here and elsewhere are the author's. On *Pancasila* ideology, see Ramage (1995).

11 In reply to criticism of the government's liberal economic policy from a seminar audience in July 1995, two senior economic ministers, Marie Muhammad and Ginandjar Kartasasmita, declared unequivocally that the Indonesian government would not slow down *konglomerasi* ('conglomerates'), a euphemism for capitalism (see *Kompas* 1995f).

12 In the 1990s the ratio of private/government share of investment has constantly been around 77/23 (*Forum Keadilan* 1995a). The reverse was true in the early years of the New Order's rule.

13 More independent reports suggest a varied, more complex, picture. Some of the riots could be described as inter-ethnic but the ethnic Chinese were not always the target. Some violent confrontations were more class-based, while in others government agents, institutions and properties were the chief targets of mass attacks. In a few cases where Chinese shops and non-Muslim houses of worship were targeted, there were suspicions that the initial perpetrators were not local Muslims but state agents provocateurs from out of the town.

14 In about the same period, operas by Guruh Sukarnoputra's *Swara Mahardhika* and theatrical performances by Nano Riantiarno's *Teater Koma* were two of the most extravagant and commercially successful cases of staged productions in the country. These productions were often mentioned as indicators of the rise of a new middle

class in Jakarta (see *Kompas* 1986). In the 1990s they found a rival in the short-lived collaborative project of the social critic-cum-singer Iwan Fals, and 'indigenous' billionaire and rock-music lover, Setiawan Djodi.

15 Not all performances have artistic pretension. President Suharto himself read poetry before a group of the nation's biggest tycoons on 2 October 1995 (*Tiras* 1995c), in a way comparable to American President Clinton's public playing of the saxophone.

16 Some noticed the new trend starting in the 1980s with a sudden huge market demand for contemporary art works (Rizal 1989). The phenomenon received wide media coverage (see *Tiara* 1993a; *Suara Merdeka* 1995). In 1985 Bandung-based painter Jeihan Sukmantoro sold his works for US$15,000 (*Editor* 1990a). The market was so lucrative that foreign artists from various countries sought to make their fortune (Yusuf 1996; *Tiara* 1993b). In 1993 direct sales during exhibitions ranged from US$50,000 to US$60,000 (*Tiara* 1993b).

17 Culturalisation of economically derived identities is not the sole prerogative of the new rich. Poetry readings and theatrical performances have been equally popular among worker activists in today's Indonesia.

18 This is a rough translation of the Indonesian expression *'enak dan perlu',* a motto of *Tempo,* the biggest news-magazine in Indonesia before the government banned it and two other weeklies on 22 June 1994. *Tempo* was one of several New Order journals that made notable success commercially as well as culturally, because it catered to the aspirations of the emergent urban new rich/middle class. One of its successful strategies was to adopt a more literary style than conventional journalistic writing.

19 Adopted from Nury Vittachi's anecdote 'Good Buy, Democracy', *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 11 January 1996:28.

20 For the most informative accounts of Indonesia's consumer culture in the 1980s, see Dick (1985) and Crouch (1985). For quantitative data on Indonesia's consumer culture, see *Tempo* (1986), *Editor* (1990b), Vatikiotis (1991) and Duffy (1992). The Jakarta-based glossy magazines *Tiras, Matra* and *Jakarta-Jakarta* are devoted specifically to feature trends in Indonesia's metropolitan lifestyle, while the English daily *Jakarta Post* publishes the annual directory of consumer culture for Jakartans (*The Jakarta Post Lifestyle*).

21 Elsewhere, I consider the political culture of *plesetan* that is made of English, Japanese and Korean (Heryanto 1996c). There I make a provisional argument that this language game asserts a new confidence to deal with the cultural constructs of world superpowers, past and present. Although more complex, the cases of *Taglish* (Tagalog English) and *Singlish* (Singaporean English) strike an accord. They all share something fundamental; they signify a new identity marker of assertive urban middle-class Southeast Asians, familiar with English, who domesticate and appropriate the language rather than try to sound like its native speakers. For a more careful political analysis of *Taglish,* see Rafael (1995). For the case of *Singlish,* see Hiebert (1996).

22 Just to mention a few, here are some names and dates of shows in Jakarta: Michael Bolton (March 1994), Bon Jovi (May 1995; see *Kompas* 1995b), Mick Jagger (October 1988), Color Me Badd (1990), Jimmy Page (1990), B.B.King (1992), New Kids on the Block (1992), Whitney Houston (1993), Sting (February 1993), Metallica (April 1993), Air Supply (January 1994), Phil Collins (March 1995), Wet Wet Wet (October 1995).

23 Tickets to Julio Iglesias' show were Rp. 750,000 (US$357); Sting's, Rp. 350,000 (US $167); Bolton's lowest ticket was Rp. 90,000 (US$43). A one-hour charity show of Kenny Rogers with dinner cost Rp. 1 million (US$476) per person. The record for ticket prices still belongs to Diana Ross, who charged Rp. 2 million (US$952) per ticket (*Forum Keadilan* 1994b).

24 In Southeast Asian societies which endure problems of economic dominance by ethnic Chinese, the new interest in Chinese culture can have an immense political impact.

25 Personal communication, 1996.

26 A comparable ban occurred on Catalan under Franco's fascism, 1939–45 (Laitin 1989:302). The governments of France in 1994 (*Tempo* 1994) and of Vietnam in 1996 (Schwarz 1996) failed in their attempts to restrict the use of all foreign languages. A more common practice world-wide is a limited linguistic ban, such as against English in billboards and names of domestic enterprises in Indonesia today (*Jakarta-Jakarta* 1993c).

27 See a letter to the editor by Subagyo (1996). The ban created a heated debate in the Internet exchanges among Indonesians and Indonesian specialists.

28 Joel Kahn (1993 and forthcoming) articulates this issue in the broader context. The revival of Chineseness outside China, and in association with economic growth, is sporadic but widespread, having become especially evident in Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam and Thailand. On Thailand, journalist Michael Vatikiotis wrote: 'Suddenly, it's cool to be Chinese' (1996).

29 According to Aswab Mahasin, a well-respected Muslim intellectual, the growing influence of Muslim institutions has 'made many people who were previously embarrassed about their faith, because it looked backward and unmodern, proud to act like Muslims' (Hefner 1993:33). See also Amir Santoso's defence of ICMI against accusations that it is responsible for the recuperation of 'sectarian', primordial politics in the country (1995).

30 Apparently there were three times more 'right extremists' jailed in 1989 for political reasons than their 'left' counterparts in the same period (see Heryanto 1996a).

31 Thus the wearing of veils by female Muslims is not always an unambiguous index of disempowerment: during the late 1980s many progressive female activists chose to wear the veil.

32 On the difficulties of wearing women's Islamic clothes, see letters of grievance to the editor of *Tiras* (Apriansyah and Nara 1995; Mulyani 1995), and an interview with a senior female television newsreader (Ramelan 1996).

33 There is an important counter-trend. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, one found many stickers and T-shirts with writing in English praising the glory of Islam (e.g., 'Islam Power', 'We Are Muslims', 'We Love Islam'). The Islamic newsmagazine *Suara Hidayatullah* regularly advertises T-shirts with texts only in English: 'Save the World with Islam', 'YES! Islam Is Our Choice', 'Islam The Wave of The Future', and a windbreaker in three colours with the text 'The Spirit of Islam'. This suggests a recognition of the superior authority or prestige of English over Arabic or Indonesian.

34 No doubt, some elements of 'primordial' or 'sectarian' politics persist in contemporary Indonesia, but this is not the whole story. Joel S.Kahn observes something strikingly similar in today's Malaysia. In his view, cultural identity and identification in Southeast Asia are increasingly 'international or global in orientation,

in the sense that they have reference to what many have termed diasporas rather than localised cultural or national groups' (forthcoming).

35 This is not to suggest that the government's interests and those of the private enterprise are fundamentally antagonistic. However, the government's retreat from business indicates its irremediable decline of political prowess. Government attempts to reassert its economic power have been disastrous as illustrated by the Timor national car industry in 1996 and Busang gold-mine scandal in 1997.

36 A complementary government measure is the 'National Discipline Movement' (*Gerakan Disiplin Nasional*) directed at public service and activities like queuing or littering. Another government move attempted to reinvigorate defunct nationalist sentiments. In 1993 and 1995, for example, the names of all buildings, real-estate complexes and corporations were converted to Indonesian. Most new rich complied only superficially with these various programmes.

37 An excerpt of the decree can be found in *Jakarta-Jakarta* (1993a:19). Among other things, it imposed restrictions on gifts, official hospitality, holiday celebrations, birthdays, weddings, and anniversaries. As early as the 1960s it was illegal for military officers to stay at Hotel Indonesia, the country's first international-class hotel. In 1979, no military office could have an air-conditioner or carpet (*Jakarta-Jakarta* 1993a: 20).

38 The Governor of Central Java proposed to build an official residential complex costing Rp. 7.04 thousand million (US$3.2m). Local government in South Sulawesi intended to purchase 23 cars, each worth Rp. 180 million (US$81,800). The Regent of Bekasi, West Java, was preparing to pay Rp. 1,000 million (US$455,000) to build a swimming pool within the Regency compound (*Forum Keadilan* 1995b, 1996c; *Tiras* 1995d).

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