

The Historical Influence of the Javanese Ethnicity and Culture on the Political Consciousness and Mentality of Indonesian People

Tatiana Ponka

Department of Theory and History of International Relations
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia
Moscow, Russia
E-mail: ponka-rudn@mail.ru

Nikita Kuklin

Department of Theory and History of International Relations
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia
Moscow, Russia
E-mail: kouklinesawicki@gmail.com

Dame Maria Nova Sibarani

Department of Theory and History of International Relations
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia
Moscow, Russia
E-mail: dame.sibarani@gmail.com

Abstract—The aim of the study is to analyze the history of the influence of the Javanese ethnicity and cultural tradition on the formation of Indonesian political consciousness, political culture and worldview in the sphere of domestic and foreign policy.

Keywords—Indonesia; political culture; diplomacy; Javanese culture; constructivism; non-Western IR theories

I. INTRODUCTION

Javanese ethnos is a constituent ethnic group in Indonesia. It was the Javanese who managed to create the earliest civilization of the Malay Archipelago among the oldest cultures of the Southeast Asia. More importantly this ethnicity has laid down the first prototypes of modern Indonesian statehood in the form of empires such as Mataram and Majapahit. For a long time, Mataram was ruled by the famous Buddhist dynasty of Saylendra, which have expanded its influence in Java and Sumatra.

It was under the Saylendra dynasty's rule in IX century B.C. when the famous Borobudur temple was built (The Buddhist stupa and its associated temple complex (candi), the Mahayana Buddhist tradition). The neighboring dynasty of Sanjaya, has built the equally famous Hindu complex Prambanan about half a century later. Both cultural monuments are currently the most recognizable images of Indonesia in the world.

The agricultural communal structure allowed the Javanese to create a developed civilization, which was formed via complex communal ties and group responsibility for the survival of the community. Many of the religions that dominated in Java had not been given the opportunity to

spread their dogmas and rules of social order because of the ancient traditions of the society formation. They were all assimilated and complemented the local culture, making it even more unique and original.

The Javanese society even today is distinguished by a complex system of traditions and customs that are observed with remarkable precision, rigor and great reverence. The syncretic philosophical tradition is another equally important area. Its philosophical categories have absorbed the best from the religious and philosophical systems of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Chinese and Indian teachings and philosophical concepts along with local forms of reality perception [15]. Taking into account the fact that the Javanese tradition has been forming for many centuries, and Javanese still occupy major government posts and have influence on the business sphere, it seems important to evaluate and analyze the degree of influence of preserved customs and worldview methods on the activities of Javanese within the political system of the state, the definition of foreign policy course of the country, as well as the formation of large ideological concepts at the heart of the state.

The main categories created on the basis of Javanese culture, such as collectivism, syncretism and the desire to maintain harmony, are key to understanding the political culture of modern Indonesia, its ideological basis and the other important aspects of life in Indonesian society.

The article will address the issue of the influence of the Javanese ethnicity and Javanese culture, understood as a combination of traditions, tangible and intangible heritage, philosophical ideas, Javanese cultural archetypes which stem from Javanese value base in modern Indonesia.

The objectives of the study were to analyze the traditions, customs, philosophical concepts, strategies and ideas of the Indonesian state and society, foreign policy, diplomacy and international relations, which originate in the Javanese ideological system.

II. THE CONCEPTION OF POWER AND POLITICS IN THE JAVANESE CULTURAL TRADITION

Following independence in 1945, the new Indonesian elite consisted almost completely of the Javanese people. At the same time, the period of the activity of the first president, Sukarno, can indeed be called the era of ethnic pluralism. Thus the second man after Sukarno, the vice-president and national hero of Indonesia Mohammad Hatta originated from Minangkabau, as well as communist Tan Malaka, and the Prime Minister Amir Sharifuddin of Batak.

The political spectrum among the country's first leaders, from socialists and communists to Islamic traditionalists and other religious leaders and parties, was also varied. Sukarno was largely able to lay this pluralistic model as the basis of a nation and a model of behavior in a society that is interested in seeking agreement in the name of unity and implementing the principle of Indonesia's national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). However, such a vision of Sukarno largely originates in his Javanese roots and the characteristics of Javanese thinking, directly beared by the first president. First of all, we need to analyze the main categories of the Javanese worldview with regard to such concepts as power, strength and balance, and here the philosophical tradition of Java gives the following answer:

Regarding the Javanese philosophical tradition, the world is filled and maintained with the energy of power ("shakti"), which has a limited constant number in the universe, only its distribution changes. This energy of power is the primary basis of the existence of politics, political power and the politicians themselves, people who, thanks to the possession of this energy and charisma, have the right to be leaders. Since the "shakti" is constant, its accumulation in one place threatens to decrease in another. In such a coordinate system, the "western" concept of legitimacy of a ruler or elite is not applicable to the Javanese worldview, legitimacy cannot flow from any legal sources, it exists by itself as a permanent unit and the one who is vested with power is automatically legitimate.

At the same time, we note that in the Javanese tradition, power is acquired in two ways, by inheritance and by divine endowment ("wahjü"), which has always been considered a gift from above to a commoner for solving difficult situations. According to such ideas, energy can be attracted to one's destiny through various mystical practices, rituals, and special artifacts.

So, for example, M.O. Kulikova in her article "Traditional Political Culture and Reforms in Indonesia", highlights the following types of "attraction" of power to his side: according to Javanese ideas, there are various ways to "pull out" "shakti" from everywhere and concentrate it in one place. These methods include, first of all, asceticism ("tapa"), yogic meditation ("samadhi") and

visiting places endowed with "shakti" ("pepunden", "kramat"). Such, according to Javanese notions, are certain mountains, caves, sacred graves, forests, coasts. Another way is to collect items that are characterized by "shakti" ("nibbler") or contact with people possessing it ("palavija"), with those who are marked by an unusual seal, often some physical features (albinos, dwarfs, lame, hunchbacks), or with those engaged in sacred activities (blacksmiths, puppeteers of the Wayang Theater) [7].

The ruler, therefore, sacralizes his power and, regardless of the name of his position, appears rather not as an official figure vested with powers under the constitution, but as an image, as a vessel of the divine energy of the universe, projecting and accumulating power.

According to Javanese ideas, if such a leader begins to use power for his enrichment, then his "pamrih" begins to manifest - which, according to a large dictionary of Indonesian language (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*), means: a hidden intention to fulfill the desire for personal gain. Pamrih sprays the leader's shakti, and his strength weakens.

To this day, many Indonesians from the common people to the elites tend to explain the decline and rise of political forces through the prism of such notions. Thus, one of the central concepts of the Javanese tradition is harmony in striving not to disrupt the distribution of energy and the balance of the world, while the existence of one leader, carrier of world energy and power, but living in the interests of their people, since the individualization of interests, their transition from the great to small things, from nobility to self-interest, demeaning the authority of a leader.

Probably, this stems from the agricultural tradition of irrigated rice cultivation underlying the Javanese culture, which requires harmonious actions of all members of the community, and then the caste system, borrowed from the Hindu tradition of statehood, finally consolidated the collective mentality of society, so each member of the community was perceived inseparably from his people regardless the social status.

In the widely known syncretic Javanese doctrine "Kebatinan", which is the basis of many mystical and philosophical ideas, the concept of destined fate ("takdir") is important, which in terms of social aspects acts as a doctrine about dharma - the eternally established order of society's relationship with the individual. In this framework the conduct of all participants, entails a previously known result, all this is perceived as the action in the traditional theater play "wayang", [10].

In fact, if one proceeds on the basis of such perception of international relations, one can infer that the importance of maintaining harmony in the world and the desire for syncretism, the adaptation of the new to the tradition designate Javanese as a "non-conflict nation". Building on this acknowledgement, we can conclude that the representatives of the Javanese ethnicity will not seek solutions to international problems from a position of

strength, moreover they'd be inclined to view the methods of diplomacy and mediation as the preferred solution.

However, history knows cases where Javanese in power, such as President Sukarno and especially President Suharto, pursued an aggressive policy.

For comparison, let us consider two situations that fully reflect the Javanese concept of world view: Sukarno's participation in the organization of the non-alignment movement and the occupation of East Timor under Suharto.

From the point of view of the authors, the first situation responded to the need to maintain harmony in the world and, as a result, to strive to isolate their region from the processes of the Cold War and the intervention of large forces that would upset the balance and "spray" power of Indonesia and its sacred leader.

The second case comes from an awareness of the integrity of the Indonesian world, led by a leader carrying divine power, since the population of Timor is Malayan in origin, and attempts to gain independence, unwillingness to become part of Indonesia, probably represented several separatisms in the Western sense of the word, territorial and legal, but sovereignty is spiritual and domineering.

Accordingly, in the eyes of Suharto, who perceived himself as the personification of leader's power, this fact was understood as a violation of his power integrity within the system of a single blood and spirit Malay people. However, as a general principle, the extension of power to the territory was considered less important than the spread of influence on people. The factor of Javanese political culture influence in the first case reinforces the desire to use peaceful methods and to maintain harmony in the outside, and in the second case the ability to show strength and to keep power inside.

However, considering the conceptual results of the rule of Javanese presidents and elites in the political field, it should be noted that the ideas that arose during these periods are the cumulative product of the intellectual activity of people of different ethnic origins who also were the persons well acquainted with the European social concepts.

III. JAVANESE ELEMENTS WITHIN PANCA SILA AND JAVANIZATION OF POLITICAL TRADITION UNDER SUKHARTO AND AFTER THE REFORMATION PERIOD

The ideological basis of modern Indonesia is a set of ideological systems for the organization of foreign and domestic policy developed earlier under the presidents Sukarno and Suharto, and their evolution. These constructs basically go back to the above traditions and philosophy of the Indonesian peoples. The ideology of "Pancha Sila", proclaimed in 1945 by President Sukarno and enshrined in the country's Constitution of August 17, 1945, is the main basis for the functioning of the Indonesian state to this day [12]. "Pancha Sila" was developed in the difficult conditions of the struggle for independence and the establishment of a sovereign Indonesian state. This philosophy needed to unite the various political forces represented by Islamic ideologues, socialists, communists and nationalists — all of them,

despite the differences, determined the independence of the country as the main purpose of their activities [11].

The views of Sukarno's teachers from the Sarekat Islam (Union of Islam) movement, such as Cokroaminoto and Agus Salim, had a major impact on its development. "Sarekat Islam" originally appeared in the Dutch East Indies as a union of Javanese batik merchants. The Union of Islamic Traders struggled in every way to empower local traders, for example, in the batik industry, and tried to suppress competition from Chinese traders, but soon turned into a full-fledged nationalist organization that actually opposed the Dutch colonial authorities and dealt with a wide range of issues from religion and culture, before the economy and the problems of social order. Cokroaminoto and Agus Salim are honored primarily as the actual founders of Islamic socialism in Indonesia, an idea that combined the teachings of the Quran and the prophet Muhammad with the principles of social justice, freedom and equality.

The Indonesian people in this case seemed to be a single whole, both in terms of ethnic, religious and spiritual kinship, which answered both traditional Javanese ideas and the Islamic concept of community ("Ummah") [6]. Traditional Javanese syncretism is also characteristic of early ideological search, when various trends united ideological platforms based on the principle of the people's unity and their spiritual needs. Thus the leader of the Indonesian communist movement, Tan Malaka, believed that communism and Islam are compatible, and that the revolution in Indonesia should be built on a similar unified base [16]. The First Minister of Justice of Indonesia, Dr. Supomo, also imagined the Panca Sila as a display of an original Javanese democracy, an image of a communal village where everyone is responsible for each other and for the common good.

In Sukarno's Javanese foreign policy, the principles of harmony and balance were reflected in the M. Hatta doctrine "Maneuvering between two stones", which indicated Indonesia's position in the Cold War. In particular, Mohammad Hatta said that in pursuing its foreign policy, Indonesia should be guided only by its own interests, and not the interests of superpowers. The proposed doctrine was called "Indonesia's independent and active doctrine" which is still serving as the basis of Indonesian foreign policy. "Independence" meant that Indonesia intended to independently determine its own position in relation to world problems without external pressures and influences, "activity" implied Indonesia's participation in constructive efforts that would help build and maintain peaceful relations with all states.

Suharto, who came to power in 1965, after the events of the coup and the suppression of the insurrection of the 30 September Movement, has built the policy of the "new order" (which was called so in opposition to the old order of Sukarno) on a more rational basis than its predecessor, paying attention to the economic reforms and the fight against ideology, mystical constructions and abstract slogans of the Sukarno era. According to the famous Russian Orientalist A.Yu. Drugov, "the social function of the "new order" was to create favorable conditions for the transfer to

the rails of accelerated capitalist development" [2]. However, on this path there were quite a lot of insurmountable obstacles and Suharto's new ideology was built on the old constructions of the "Panca Sila", which was effective and simple in perception by all residents of the country. Russian orientalist S.A. Voronin believes that Suharto proclaimed a kind of "ijtihad" of the "Panca Sila" concept, i.e. urged "to restore the purity of "Panca Sila".

After cleansing the principles of "Panca Sila" from the later ideological overlays, Suharto switched to the policy of its universal cult. But, in the opinion of S.A. Voronin, Suharto's merit as a political leader consists primarily in the fact that he managed to restore stability to the political system of Indonesia by offering one common and fairly simple philosophy instead of a wide range of unintelligible and unproductive acronyms" [1].

At the same time, Suharto, with his desire to streamline the ideology and implant the traditional Javanese values, in the entire multi-ethnic society of the country contributed a lot to the birth of such a phenomenon as Javanisation and priyayisation (from the word priyayi, Javanese colonial official). In the perception of many Indonesians, Javanese traditions and norms gave rise to a strong social stratification, also giving way to such negative tendencies as corruption, patronism, nepotism and abuse of power. Many of the officials chosen by democratic principles at that time were also likened to the sacred all-powerful ancient aristocracy. Due to this fact the aristocratic-bureaucratic model was extremely understandable for them, moreover, the majority of the Javanese population was also used to it [14].

As it was already mentioned Suharto in issues outside the "Malay world" managed to return Indonesian significant influence in the region via the participation in the creation of ASEAN, and via supporting both the Hatta doctrine and the Javanese principle of balance.

The fall of the Suharto regime has led to the exacerbation of many problems within Indonesian society. Reformation designated radical transformations. The main slogans of the reformers' politicians were the fight against corruption, the deprivation of the army of superstates of the times of Suharto, and the restoration of the basic civil liberties.

The Issues of separatism and terrorism have become more acute, the issue of East Timor's independence has once again come up on the agenda, and the situation in Aceh province, full of supporters of complete Islamization and secession from Indonesia, has become tense [8].

The first difficulty faced by post-Suharto leaders is the transition to democratic principles from traditional ideals, a strong authoritarian figure in the power and domination of any social group (know, rich, army). As you can see, those principles of the country's political life (in many ways Javanese) incorporated into the national ideology "Panca Sila" and the country's constitution at the independence stage now radically changed, as the world itself changed after the collapse of the bipolar system.

All subsequent presidents of the country partially retained the tendency to a strong state arm and in one way or

another came from the Javanese ethnos, for example, B. J. Habibie was a noble Javanese from Yogyakarta by mother. Megawati Sukarnoputri was actually the daughter of the great Sukarno [13]. At the same time, the growing influence of the masses, the financial and political power of a number of other ethnic groups balanced the "Javanese aristocracy". In fact, the Reformation allowed to relieve the tension and get rid of those problematic moments that were present in the Javanese vision of the government.

IV. CONCLUSION

Indonesian culture as one of the oldest on the planet has formed a large-scale original concept of world perception, which to this day plays an important basis for the mentality of Indonesians and the country's political elites. The foundations of modern Indonesian society and political culture are derived from the Javanese culture. This type of mindset with an extensive philosophical tradition is characterized by the ability to synthesize various ideas and religions, along with their adaptation to the needs of the society. Thanks to the Javanese foundations, the Indonesian society mindset can be called collectivist. In accordance with the needs of the collective, Indonesian society perceives the actions of politicians, relying on the complex system of the world pattern of predominantly Hindu origin.

It is also worth noting that the internal political situation has historically been decisive for foreign policy, while preserving in a strategic sense neutralism and the balance between power and mediation patterns of behavior. The tactics of Indonesian diplomacy and the choice of goals varied depending on the policies, ideas and worldview of one or another government and for the most part the president of the country, whose figure is not only convicted by the authorities constitutionally, but also has traditionally sacral significance.

Thus, initially, the formation of the general Indonesian mindset and political culture was influenced by the historical past of the Javanese ethnos in the face of the Hinduized states of antiquity and the Middle Ages, their structure and social institutions, then the Javanese ethnic core greatly succeeded, incorporating into the colonial structure of governance and thus maintaining its power and status. Subsequently, the rule of two Javanese Sukarno and Suharto and their role in consolidating and developing the country established for Javanese ethnos the main and state-forming status, the traditions of which penetrated both the foreign and domestic policy, laying the foundation for the modern political and business tradition of Indonesia.

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