

# Marine Corps Intelligence Activity

## Cultural Study

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### Cultural Intelligence for Military Operations: Indonesia

#### DoD-2630-IDN-010-06

## Summary

- Indonesia is a geographic mixing point between the traditional Malay peoples of most of Southeast Asia and the Austronesian peoples to the east.
- The country's territory stretches thousands of miles from east to west and has a centuries-old history of settlement and interaction with the region and rest of the world. Consequently its culture and society reflect influences from China, India, the Middle East, and other areas of Southeast Asia.
- Indonesians have adopted a mix of traditional Asian values along with the particular practices of each ethnic group. Many of the customs, gestures, and values (called adat) are similar for each ethnic group, even though they may have a different origin.
- Most Indonesians, regardless of ethnic group, share a respect for tradition and culture, close ties and obligation to one's family, and a respect for hierarchy, which translates into deference to age and education.
- Islam is the predominant religion (approximately 90% of the population), but the Islam practiced in Indonesia is generally more moderate than that practiced in the Middle East. There are also large numbers of Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists (who together make up the remaining 10 percent of the population). Virtually all Indonesians also incorporate traditional and animist religious practices and beliefs into their daily lives.
- The degree of religious devotion and observance differs among various ethnic groups and regions. Some Indonesians are nominal Muslims, identifying themselves as such for official purposes but largely practicing their traditional faiths, while others, such as the Acehnese, are orthodox Muslims.
- Maintaining territorial and national integrity is of paramount concern to the government, and to Indonesians in general. National integrity is such an overriding concept for the armed forces that the harsh suppression of political or religious activists can be justified if they are seen as threatening the nation's integrity or development.
- The overall attitude toward the U.S. and its military is one of caution and mistrust regarding larger national and foreign policy issues, but this rarely manifests itself in direct confrontations with Western or U.S. persons, even military. The United States has gained considerable credibility throughout Indonesia through tsunami relief operations in Aceh, and recent hospital ship visits in eastern Indonesia.
- The national language, Bahasa Indonesia ("Indonesian Language"), is a standardized form of the Malay language. It is the common language of commerce and interaction throughout the country. However, there are also hundreds of regional or ethnic languages and dialects, often distinct to individual villages or locales, and the level of proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia is lower in more remote areas of the country. In many cases, an individual will use the local or ethnic language in daily life, but Bahasa Indonesia for communicating with members of other ethnic groups or the

government. English proficiency declines dramatically outside urban areas, with virtually no English capability in rural villages. Though Indonesians are predominantly Muslim, Arabic is not commonly used in the region except in the most orthodox Muslim provinces.

## Regional and Ethnic differences



### Regional and Ethnic Differences

## Physical Description

Most Indonesians have dark brown hair and brown eyes, and are slightly shorter and thinner than the average American. The majority of Indonesians are members of the Malay ethnic groups. Their skin is often a light brown, with the wide faces and straight black hair common to Malay people. Ethnic Malays and Chinese are both classified as members of the Mongoloid race, but the Malays' skin pigment tends to be darker than that of Chinese people. Indians in Indonesia typically have a relatively light complexion. The Chinese tend to have the lightest skin color, and many have the distinctive almond-shaped eyes typical of East Asians. Austronesian/Polynesian people make up a larger portion of the Indonesian population as one moves eastward. In general, Austronesian/Polynesians are taller than individuals from other areas of Indonesia, with male and female adult heights closer to Western norms. Their skin is dark, often appearing Negroid and their facial features are those common to Papuan and South Pacific peoples, clearly different from the widely recognized facial features of most Asians. Their hair tends to be kinky and wiry rather than straight.

## Religion

Indonesia is overwhelmingly Muslim, and the majority of people in most provinces are Muslim. However, there are regions, in some cases entire provinces, that are predominantly Christian or Hindu. For example, North Sumatra is home to the largest number of Christians in Indonesia—3.61 million or 20 percent of Indonesia's Christian population, and the province of Bali is predominantly Hindu. There are also small numbers of Buddhists, mostly concentrated among the ethnic Chinese populations in urban areas.

Prior to the arrival of the world religions (Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, and Buddhism), animism was

the dominant belief system throughout most of Indonesia. Animist religion still plays a major role, although many of these aspects have been incorporated into the mainstream religious beliefs and practices, and have become inextricably melded by most Indonesians into a single belief system. This religious mixture informs and influences all aspects and choices of daily life, from determining prime dates for funerals and weddings, to deciding on planting and harvesting days and times. This is seen primarily in the invocation of spirits and ancestors for major decisions. For example, various objects mark religiously or culturally significant sites, such as village boundaries, rice paddy/field ownership, or religiously significant locations, and ancestors are consulted and celebrated for marriages, births, deaths, home building, and other major life events.

## **Adat**

Values, practices, and way of life in Indonesia are heavily influenced by *adat*. *Adat* is a broad term which refers to customs, traditions, and a set of social norms that have always existed for each ethnic group. In many areas of Indonesia, established and widely-held notions of *adat* are sometimes a basis for legal judgment. Violating *adat* may be considered extremely inappropriate or rude and in some cases is a severe social taboo. Each ethnic group has its own notions of what constitutes *adat*; however, some values or practices are shared by most ethnic groups. Filial piety, or respect and loyalty to one's family and elders, is common to most ethnic groups. In addition, indigenous property rights to communal land are regarded as *adat*. Indonesians often use the concept of *adat* to explain the individual characteristics or beliefs that are held by each ethnic group. If one asks why another individual has a particular custom or tradition, the response is often that it is part of that person's *adat*.

For most ethnic groups, *adat* is held in the same esteem as Islam. Because of the prominence of *adat*, it has also served as a moderating influence on the practice of Islam in Indonesia. For instance, within Minangkabau society in Sumatra, matrilineal practices are an important part of *adat*, even though some of those practices are at odds with patriarchal Islamic teachings. This syncretic tradition, which allows Islam and *adat* to co-exist, is common for ethnic groups throughout Indonesia.

## **Islam**

Islam is a monotheistic religion in which God is a pervasive but distant figure. The Prophet Muhammad is not given God status, but is revered as the man chosen to spread the word of God to others. Islam's holy book is the Koran. The religion is based on high moral principles and inspires the individual to attempt achievement of holiness and righteousness through strict adherence to Islamic principles. Those principles include Islamic law (*sharia*) based on the Koran; the *sunna*, Islamic tradition which includes the *hadith ijma*, the consensus of a local group of Islamic legal scholars and sometimes the entire Muslim community. Islam is universalist, allowing conversion of people of any national, ethnic, or ideological origin.

There are six articles of belief typically shared by Muslims:

- Belief in Allah, the one and only God worthy of worship
- Belief in the Angels Gabriel and Michael
- Belief in the Books (sent by God)
- Belief in all of the Prophets and Messengers (sent by God).
- Belief in Fate
- Belief in the Day of Judgment (Qiyamah) and in the Resurrection.

Muslims are expected to perform five basic duties, known as the Five Pillars of Islam:

- Profess that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet
- Pray five times per day
- Give alms (zakat) to the poor and to the mosque
- Fast from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadan
- Make a pilgrimage (haj) to the holy city of Mecca at least once in one's lifetime if financially and physically able

Muslims gather collectively for worship on Fridays at the mosque, which is also a center for teaching of the *Koran*. The *imam* and the *ulama* play important roles in providing religious guidance to the people.

## Islam in Indonesia

The degree of religious devotion and observance differs among various ethnic groups and regions. Some Indonesians are nominal Muslims, identifying themselves as such for official purposes but largely practicing their traditional faiths, while others, such as the Acehnese, are orthodox Muslims. Muslims in Indonesia are often regarded as belonging to one of two categories: (1) *abangan*, less religious, or (2) *santri*, devout. Most Indonesians consider themselves *abangan*.

The practice of Islam in Indonesia is greatly moderated by traditional cultural practices, making it significantly different from Islam in the Middle East. Because a Hindu-Buddhist civilization already existed in the region, Islam was forced to adapt to local conditions. In addition, Islam came to Indonesia via Muslim traders from India, not from the Middle East. Therefore, the form of Islam introduced in Indonesia was modified by Hindu-Buddhist Indian influences, Sufism (a mystical form of Islam), and indigenous spiritual and cultural beliefs into a syncretic form of Islam. This more inclusive form of Islam is evident even among the more devout Muslims in Indonesia. For instance, the Minangkabau, who are known as fervent Muslims, have matrilineal inheritance customs, passing land and wealth down from mother to daughter, though this practice is at odds with male-focused traditional Islamic laws regarding inheritance.

There has been an increasing shift in the last several decades towards a purer, stricter, more conservative form of Islam. For instance, there is increased social pressure to observe the rules of Ramadan and a greater number of people are observing the daily prayer requirements. In addition, there is increasing strictness regarding dating and more women have adopted the *jilbab*.

## Christianity in Indonesia

Christianity arrived in various parts of Indonesia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but it wasn't until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the Dutch colonial government began to allow and at times, actively support Christian missionaries. Their goal in doing so was to curb the influence of radical Islam, particularly of fundamentalist Muslims who wished to eliminate non-Islamic elements from their society. Christian conversion was often targeted at specific ethnic groups and regions, and as a result, there are pockets throughout Indonesia that are predominantly Christian. Christianity's popularity in Indonesia rose sharply in the years following the 1965 failed communist coup, when many animist and rural groups were targeted for being atheist.

## Buddhism in Indonesia

Buddhism in Indonesia is primarily practiced by the ethnic Chinese. Although various sects approach Buddhist doctrine in different ways, a central feature of the religion is acknowledgment of the Four

Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. The Four Noble Truths involve the recognition that all existence is full of suffering; the origin of suffering is the craving for worldly objects; suffering ceases when craving ceases; and the Eightfold Path leads to enlightenment. The Eightfold Path involves the maintenance of perfect views, resolve, speech, conduct, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration.

Buddhists believe that souls are reborn after death into humans, animals, or plants. One's present state is a reflection of past behavior (karma), and present actions will affect one's future state. Due to this, many Chinese believe in destiny ( *yuanfen* ) as a repercussion of one's behavior in a former life. This belief emphasizes acceptance of hardship in this life as a result of past actions in a previous life. This cycle of death and rebirth continues until one has acquired sufficient merit through good deeds to be released from the cycle. Buddhists worship many deities, which include personalities who have escaped the cycle of rebirth (called *bodhisattvas* ).

## **Hinduism**

Most Indians in Indonesia are Hindus. Hinduism is one of the world's oldest religions, dating back more than 5,000 years. Though Hinduism does not have a codified system of beliefs or linkage to a known founder, there are some tenets that are held by all Hindus. Among the most important is the belief in one Supreme Being referred to as Brahman, who is present in all living things, and is also embodied in countless lesser Hindu gods and goddesses.

Hindus (like Buddhists) also believe that all living things have souls, and after death, the soul is reincarnated in another form. One's present state is a reflection of past behavior (karma, the same term used in Buddhism), and present actions will affect one's future state. Hindus refer to karma in order to encourage good actions, and to explain both good and evil events that occur in a person's life as a consequence of past actions. This cycle of life, death, and rebirth continues until the soul achieves *moksha* , or release from the cycle of reincarnation. *Moksha* is achieved only after a long journey of observing proper behavior (dharma) over many lifetimes, and is the ultimate goal of all Hindus.

An important aspect of Hinduism is a particular reference the scriptures make to the social ordering of people. This concept groups people into four *varnas* , or castes. Each *varna* has rules of conduct regarding diet, marriage, and contact with people of other *varnas* . Over time, a caste system developed from these references into an enforced social hierarchy, in which individuals were discriminated against based on caste. Though the influence of caste has declined, it is still invoked by some Indonesian Hindus with regard to select issues such as marriage.

Hinduism manifests itself in Indonesian society and culture primarily through public holidays and festivals. In Indonesia, the most widely known festival is Thaipusam, taking place in late January or early February, and celebrating Lord Murugam. There are major processions to Hinduism temples for offerings and prayer, and many devotees undergo extensive body and skin piercing as symbols of penitence and devotion. Hindu temples in the larger cities are often large and extensively decorated. Visitors are welcome. In villages and smaller cities the temples often are more modest.

## **Confucianism**

Confucianism is a set of beliefs that form a basic world view for almost all Indonesian Chinese. Confucianism is not a formal religion. Consequently, most Indonesian Chinese Buddhists or Christians would also likely identify with some principles and tenets of Confucianism. Confucianism is based on a set of ancient rituals that organize society, relationships, and proper behavior. The world view emphasizes the role of proper behavior by individuals in order to ensure social harmony. Confucianism

places great value on education and respect for hierarchy.

Confucianism forms a simple code of conduct that emphasizes education and order. It shows itself within Chinese society by strict adherence to rather straightforward rules of obedience and respect to elders and seniors, whether in family, business, organizational, or social settings. Education is very important, and manifests itself in a drive for extensive education, usually well beyond the college undergraduate level.

## **International Connections**

Many Islamic organizations and governments worldwide are actively influencing the practice and interpretation of Islam in Indonesia. For example, Saudi Arabia strongly supports the establishment of *pesantren* in Indonesia. As modern forms of Islamism (i.e. political Islam) have emerged in Indonesia, an increasing number of Indonesians have embraced extremist forms of Islam. International Christian missionary outreach efforts are also common in many areas of Indonesia, though the government officially restricts proselytizing.

## **Language**

The national language, *Bahasa Indonesia Bahasa Indonesia* is widely spoken throughout Indonesia and taught in all public schools. It is the common language of commerce and interaction throughout the country. However, there are also hundreds of regional or ethnic languages and dialects, often distinct to individual villages or locales, and the level of proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia is lower in more remote areas of the country, especially Papua. In many cases, an individual will use the local or ethnic language in most daily life, but use *Bahasa Indonesia* for communicating with members of other ethnic groups or the government. Within each group, several dialects usually exist. For instance, each Batak sub-group in Sumatra has its own dialect, and Bataks from opposing ends of Sumatra may not be able to communicate with each other because of the difference in dialects.

Chinese merchants speak their respective clan or ethnic Chinese dialect. Mandarin is common, as is Cantonese, Hakka, and Hokkien. All Chinese will be functionally proficient and likely fully fluent in Bahasa Indonesia. Some Chinese will possess English proficiency, especially if they deal regularly with tourists or travel internationally.

English proficiency declines dramatically outside of these areas, with virtually no English capability in rural villages.

Though Indonesians are predominantly Muslim, Arabic is not commonly used in the region. The exception is Aceh, the most orthodox Muslim province in Indonesia, where Arabic is often used in prayer and is widely taught in schools.

## **Cultural History**

The region of modern-day Indonesia has been a major maritime trading center for over a thousand years, resulting in a wide range of religious, cultural and ethnic influences. Ethnic Chinese traders were among the first outsiders to have a presence in the area, followed in the eighth century AD by Hindu and Buddhist merchants from India. By at least the 13th century there was also a strong Islamic influence brought by Arab and Malay seafarers. The English and Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in the area in the 16th century, but from 1814 until the Japanese invasion during World War II, Indonesia was under autocratic Dutch rule.

Resistance against Dutch colonial rule began in the late 19th century, and a full-fledged independence movement emerged in the 1920s under the leadership of Ahmed Sukarno. This independence movement gained strength when the Dutch East Indies were overrun by the Japanese during World War II, and in 1949, under international pressure, the Dutch were forced to concede the country's sovereignty.

In order to create a unitary state, Sukarno concentrated political and economic power in Java, and grew increasingly authoritarian in his rule. His policies produced resentment outside Java, and many of the outlying provinces and minority ethnic groups remain distrustful and suspicious of the central government to this day. The Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) gained support throughout the 1960s, and in September 1965, a coup was launched by sections of the army with full PKI support. With discreet support from the Western powers, the army Chief of Staff, General Suharto backed Sukarno, and saved the regime. However, between 400,000 and one million Indonesians were massacred by the army in the aftermath of the coup, and the military became the predominant center of authority when General Suharto replaced Sukarno in March 1967.

Suharto's regime brought Indonesia relative peace and stability and steady economic growth, though at the cost of occasional and persistent severe crackdowns on any dissident or separatist groups. Under Suharto's rule, Muslim fundamentalism was also rigorously controlled.

Indonesia was particularly hard hit by the Asian financial crisis that began in 1997. As the economy drastically contracted, thousands of Indonesians were thrown out of work, and months of rioting and protest followed. The army, which was already struggling with several insurgencies on Indonesia's outlying territories, also began to reduce its support to Suharto.

Since Suharto's fall, Indonesia has had several relatively peaceful transfers of power between governments and political parties. In 2004, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, a retired general and former security minister, was elected President. He has set an ambitious agenda for reform, but economic difficulties combined with the rise of militant Islam and a variety of ethnic and inter-communal conflicts continue to pose challenges in holding the country together. The former Portuguese colony of East Timor, a region under Indonesian military occupation between 1974 and 1999, was recently granted full independence, and there is a strong fear on the part of the government, as well as many Indonesians, that other areas will demand independence or autonomy, threatening the integrity of the nation. For example, in August 2005, the government signed a treaty with the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM)—but only after many years of fighting that killed thousands of civilians. The government has also used strong measures to suppress a festering independence movement in Papua.

## Customs

The Indonesians have adopted a mix of traditional Asian values along with the particular practices of each ethnic group. Many of the customs, gestures and values are similar for each ethnic group, even though they may have a different origin. Islam plays an important role in daily life and customs for most Indonesians, and affects many of the country's customs, holidays, and cultural attitudes. Most Indonesians, regardless of ethnic group, share a respect for tradition and culture, close ties and obligation to one's family, and a respect for hierarchy, which translates into deference to age and education. A good example would be the (originally Muslim/Middle Eastern) *salaam* gesture. When meeting with friends or strangers and shaking hands, one touches the right hand lightly to one's own chest after shaking. It is a sign of respect and familiarity. Another would be the Chinese bow. Although not nearly as formal and physically exaggerated as the traditional Japanese bow, it is a simple gesture of respect and can go a long way to establishing a positive relationship and tone, especially when first meeting.

## Greetings

Handshakes are an appropriate form of greeting in most cases. Handshakes are softer and less firm than in the West. Members of the opposite sex may shake hands in urban settings, but almost never do so in rural settings. In some cases, women may simply nod slightly when introduced. If a woman does shake hands, it is usually at her initiative. It is polite to bow slightly when meeting elderly or senior-ranking individuals and wait for them to initiate the handshake.

Business cards are often exchanged when meeting in both business and social situations. It is customary and polite to give and receive the cards using both hands, and to keep the card out for the duration of the meeting.

Common English greetings are generally acceptable and understood by most Indonesians in urban areas. A common Indonesian greeting is, “*Selamat pagi/siang/malam*,” (“Good morning/afternoon/evening”) and, “*Apa khabar?*” (literally, “What is the news?”). Muslims often greet each other with the Arabic greeting, “*Ahsalaam aliaikum*” (“Peace be upon you”). The proper response is “*Wa’alikum ahsalaam.*” Indonesians also greet by performing *salaam*, in which two people bring their right palms together (as if they were going to shake hands), touch hands, slide them part; and then touch the palm of the hand to the heart. Chinese may greet each other by asking, “*Ni hao ma?*” (“How are you?”) or, “*Tse pau le ma?*”

Many Indonesians, particularly the Javanese, only have one name, but often add a title, such as “Bapak Dokter Suprpto” (literally “Mister Doctor Suprpto”). Indonesians are addressed by their given name, along with any title. For example, the retired general and current President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is called “Bapak Presiden,” (“Mister President”). The general honorific for a man is “Bapak,” meaning literally “father,” but also serving to mean “Mister” and “Sir.” If one knows a man’s name, such as Juwono, then one would address him as “Bapak Juwono.” “Bapak” may be shortened to “Pak,” which is slightly less formal, so Juwono also could be called “Pak Juwono.” Ladies are addressed as “Ibu,” or the less formal “Bu,” meaning “mother,” and the usage is the same as that of “bapak.” “Ibu” and “Bu” do not differentiate between a married and unmarried woman.

For Chinese names, the family name comes first, followed by the given name, so Ms. Lin would be used for someone named Lin Ming-na. A Chinese given name is only used in informal situations. Many children will address older adults as “auntie” or “uncle,” even those whom they do not know. This is done as a sign of respect.

## Gestures

- One gets another person’s attention by waving all fingers of the right hand with the palm facing down in a downward fanning motion. It is considered rude to wave by curling the fingers with the palm facing up.
- Pointing at someone or forming the rounded “OK” sign with the fingers is considered rude. To point to something or someone, it is best to open the palm facing upwards and extend the hand in that direction.
- It is always better to use the right hand to give and receive objects or to point with.
- Prolonged direct eye contact may be interpreted as a sign of aggression. It is polite to catch a counterpart’s eyes for a second, then lower the head and look down.
- The head is the most sacred area and should not be touched by others unless absolutely necessary. Conversely, the foot is considered the lowest part of the body, so it is rude to show the bottom of one’s feet or soles or to move important objects with a foot. As a result, most Indonesians cross their legs at the knee when sitting instead of resting the ankle on the knee.



- Tapping the foot implies a lack of interest.
- Pounding a fist into an open palm is considered rude.

## **Visiting**

It is common to be invited into a home. Shoes and socks are removed before entering a home. If there are guests present, it is expected that one will shake hands with everyone present. Shaking hands is always done standing up. Shaking hands is mandatory with men but a man should wait for a woman to offer her hand before a male initiates a handshake. It is generally impolite to arrive late for meetings or business events, though many Indonesians do not follow the practice of punctuality. All ethnic groups place a strong emphasis on family, and tend to visit relatives often. It is usually impolite to refuse initial offers of food or drink. To refuse seconds, place the hand above the plate. When finished, place the utensils together perpendicularly on the plate. If they are not placed together, more food may be offered.

## **Negotiations**

Most Indonesians tend to avoid conflict and negotiate in an indirect manner (one exception being the Batak ethnic group). However, failure to negotiate can be seen as a sign of both ignorance and weakness, and an indicator of being unfamiliar with the matter at hand. Often, a spirited yet mutually beneficial negotiated outcome is an opportunity to gain respect. It is inappropriate to become angry or agitated during a difficult negotiation; it is advisable in such a situation to politely refuse or end the discussion and then depart.

The concept of “face” is important in negotiations with all Indonesians. Face is similar in meaning to respect and social stature. A person loses face by making a mistake, failing to live up to others’ expectations, demonstrating ignorance, or losing his composure. One gains respect by remaining dignified or by giving face to others—showing care for guests, arriving early or on time to a meeting, praising someone in front of that person’s superior, and not drawing attention to others’ mistakes in public. This concept is important for negotiations; if negotiators feel at any time that their own face or the face of their organization or country has been harmed, they may terminate the discussions. It is also considered a loss of face to say “no” outright. Phrases like “it is difficult” or “it is inconvenient” are used instead to express a negative response. Subtle changes in body language also give clues to the outlook of the negotiator—leaning forward slightly tends to signal agreement, while a stern face or looking down indicates opposition. Raising one’s voice is not likely to be productive, as it causes a loss of face for all involved.

## **Displays of Affection**

Public displays of affection are extremely rare. Younger generations may hold hands in public places such as shopping malls. Same-sex friends may hold hands or be arm-in-arm, although this is usually only applies to girls or women. Public kissing and other displays of affection are discouraged, and often seen as provocative and insulting. Indonesians generally do not touch members of the opposite sex in public, and there has been a dramatic increase in adherence to Islamic norms relating to displays of affection and manner of dress in the last several years.

## **Business**

Indonesian business frequently draws upon family and personal connections. Therefore, nepotism may be considered good business practice, not corruption. Introductions or referrals are extremely important for

an outsider conducting business in these cases. It is customary to arrange meetings in advance, and meetings are generally more successful when arranged by a mutual acquaintance if the parties do not initially know each other. Most local business persons will be ethnic Chinese, whether shopkeepers, merchants, or business professionals. Most Chinese will have an ethnic Indonesian partner (Javanese, Lombokese, Sumbawanese, etc.) with whom they work closely. Both partners would normally be present for business meetings. It is rare for partners to make decisions immediately, and they usually consult each other before any decision.

## **Gifts**

When visiting a home for the first time, it is acceptable to bring food such as fruit or cakes as an initial gift. However, given local animist beliefs and their wide variation and interpretations, gifts could be interpreted in any manner of ways, so are not always advisable. However, small toys for children are usually well received, and writing instruments such as pens are usually popular. A very popular gift for men is a Western multi-tool or small blade, as are any kind of Western gadgets. Islam prohibits the consumption of alcohol, so it should not be given unless it is requested (many Indonesians consume alcohol regardless of religion). Gifts should never be extravagant or beyond the recipients ability to reciprocate. Gifts are not immediately opened.

## **Values and Practices**

Most Indonesians will likely exhibit some Western manners and behaviors but also retain distinct cultural values at the same time.

- Religion plays a large role in the mindset and daily life of most Indonesians. Many relationships are established with initial questions regarding religion (as well as family status and occupation. Adat, or customary law, guides the important ceremonies and events in life, such as birth, coming of age, and marriage.
- The Chinese tend to value success, measured in both academic and economic terms; the Chinese community tends to be better educated than the other ethnic groups. They also play a disproportionate role in the country's economy.

## **Diet**

Eating customs differ among Indonesia's ethnic groups, as well as within each ethnic group. Rice is the most common food, an essential ingredient of any meal. Taro is also a major source of starch. Given the proximity of the sea, fish and other sea foods are prevalent. Shrimp paste is a standard part of many dishes. Most meals also will feature at least one vegetable dish, usually more. Green beans are very popular, fixed in a variety of ways. Coconut milk and palm oil are often the basis of many sauces. Beef is enjoyed, but is not common, and what is called beef is often water buffalo. Pork is exceedingly rare, especially in Muslim areas. Most Indonesian foods contain shrimp or shrimp paste, peanuts, palm oil, chilies or other hot spices, and coconut milk. Milk and dairy products are rare.

Plates and bowls of food are usually laid out in the center of a table, where it is eaten communal style, with people taking a small portion to their own plate before being placed in the mouth. It is rude to pass food between two people with chopsticks—allow the food to be placed on a plate before picking it up. Guests are often served food by their hosts, and it is considered rude to leave food on the plate. Drinks and small dishes are passed using the right hand or both hands. Use of the left hand for anything other than providing support to the right hand for a heavy dish should be avoided. The left hand should not be

used to signal or pass things to others. Meals can last several hours, especially formal or official dinners. Placing a hand or leaving ones chopsticks over the plate signals that one is finished eating.

## Clothing

Most urban Indonesians wear Western-style clothing, sometimes in combination with a few traditional articles that are unique to their ethnic group. Many men wear the traditional sarong with a loose tunic for a shirt. Most women wear the *hijab* head covering, with a tunic that covers their arms down to their wrists. Western dress, such as blue jeans and short-sleeved t-shirts, are often worn by younger individuals and in Westernized/tourist areas. It is advisable to dress conservatively whenever leaving urban areas, and especially when going into remote village areas. Men should wear long pants and a long-sleeved shirt (with the sleeves down). Women should also dress conservatively, covering their arms and legs to at least below the knee, ideally to the ankle. Women should carry a scarf with which to cover their heads if the need arises.

Clothing that is considered appropriate Islamic fashion has gained in popularity after the fall of Suharto in 1998. Under Suharto, traditional Muslim clothing often was seen as a sign of backwardness and militancy. Traditional Islamic clothing has recently become increasingly important for both women and men, both as a personal statement of freedom of clothing, and also due to widespread public pressure. Men may wear a *songkok* and a *sarong*, usually with an untucked loose long-sleeved shirt. Women increasingly wear the *hijab* head covering, but in a variety of highly fashionable colors and fabrics. Women in urban areas sometimes wear the *hijab* with tight jeans and tight t-shirts, but many women and young girls also wear the more conservative *baju kurung* outfit. Chinese rarely wear non-Western clothing other than perhaps a *sarong* in informal settings.

## Social Values

### Centers of Authority

Indonesians are more deferential to authority than most Westerners. Most of Indonesia's ethnic groups place more emphasis on social order and deference to superiors than on individual achievement or personal initiative. Age, rank, social standing, wealth, and education are all used to determine superior-inferior relationships between individuals. Superiors are expected to mentor and protect those below them in return for deference and loyalty. Deference and respect is paid to rank/position/title, authority, age/seniority, and education/experience, usually in this order. Patronage, as an adjunct form of deference to authority and position, is also a very important aspect of Indonesian social interaction, although it usually takes place within respective ethnic groups, and rarely crosses these lines.

### The Family

On an individual level, the most important unit of society among Indonesians is the family. Within the family, traditional concepts of the roles of women and men persist. Men typically hold a position of superiority, and women have little authority in family or national decision-making (with the exception of the Mingakabau ethnic group). Clan, lineage, and geographic affiliation also strongly affect the cultural attributes, ethnic identity, and behavior within each of Indonesia's ethnic groups. Families tend to stay closely together, even into adult ages. Children often live in the family house until married, and then live very close to their respective families.

## **Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Regionalism**

Ethnic groups tend to be localized, such as the Bataks of northern and central Sumatra, the Torajans of central Sulawesi, etc. However, both Dutch colonial policies as well as those of the Suharto government included moving significant numbers of ethnic groups into new areas. For example, the Dutch employed large numbers of Madurese as soldiers, so many areas in Java and Sumatra where there were military bases now have concentrated populations of Madurese. In eastern Indonesia, the Dutch also transplanted and encouraged the movement of Christian Sumbanese, Rotinese, and Sawunese from their home islands to Flores and parts of Sumbawa to act as colonial bureaucrats, and to serve as barriers to the eastward spread of Islam from Java.

During the Suharto era a program of transmigration was begun, in which large numbers of Javanese, Madurese, and Balinese were moved from their heavily crowded home islands to areas in Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Papua. The program was touted as voluntary, but the government also forcibly moved many under the nominal auspices of the program, often transplanting entire villages to new locations. These new settlements were intentionally set up to retain their own ethnic culture and character, and today one can find Balinese villages in southern Sumatra, Madurese villages in Kalimantan, and large networks of isolated Javanese villages in Papua.

Territorial integrity is one of the most important national security issues in Indonesia. As a fiercely nationalistic nation which has experienced a protracted revolutionary war, a post-independence civil war, the massacres and purges of 1965-66, conflict with Malaysia over neo-colonialism, post-independence struggle with the Netherlands to secure Papua, numerous localized insurgencies and uprisings, the Aceh rebellion, and the 1999 loss of East Timor in a United Nations-sponsored referendum, Indonesia is extremely sensitive to any and all threats to the integrity of the republic. In many ways Indonesia feels besieged by powerful domestic and internal forces which are constantly striving to pull the nation apart. Consequently the government, and more particularly the armed forces, are absolutely unwilling to entertain the notion of any part of the nation seceding or being separated from the whole. This explains Indonesia's intractability until recently on Aceh, and its often brutal treatment of self-determination advocates in areas such as Riau and Papua.

Ethnicity and nationality are closely intertwined in Indonesia. Both Sukarno and Suharto were relentless in instilling a sense of national identity and nationalist pride in every citizen. The universal use of Bahasa Indonesia as the national language is the single best example of how well this has succeeded.

## **Cultural Views**

Although political leaders have attempted to moderate animosity between ethnic groups in Indonesia, tension is pronounced and visible between some groups. After the Asian financial crisis and the fall of the Suharto regime in the late 1990s, ethnic and religious tensions have been rising in some areas. Outbreaks of inter-communal violence between Christians and Muslims in the Molucca Islands, between Muslims and Christians in central Sulawesi, and between indigenous Dayaks and Madurese in Kalimantan Province has claimed many thousands of lives in recent years.

Many Indonesians are resentful toward the ethnic Chinese for their disproportionate role in the economy and the People's Republic of China support to the Communist insurgency in the 1960s. Many non-Javanese are resentful toward government policies that impose and expand Javanese social and cultural norms over other ethnic groups and areas.

The general Indonesian outlook toward the United States is one of caution and wariness, but colored very

positively by the high-profile disaster relief operations following the catastrophic December 2004 tsunami and the recent visits of the USNS MERCY to Alor and Timor. Indonesians are generally suspicious of U.S. foreign policy, which is viewed as anti-Islamic. However, it is extremely unlikely that any U.S. citizen or U.S. military personnel would be singled out for harassment or negative attention, whether in uniform or not. Basic societal rules of personal conduct keep this kind of public criticism in check.

## **Cultural Economy**

Indonesia's government plays a significant role in the economy, owning at least 158 enterprises and administering price controls on several basic goods, including fuel, rice, and electricity. Many Indonesians consider the country's economic development as a national priority, and the Asian financial crisis was a severe blow not only to the economy, but also the pride of many citizens. Much of the economy is based on extraction of natural resources outside of the capital city of Java, including crude oil, natural gas, tin, copper and gold. Much of the resentment toward the central government by residents of outlying provinces is focused on what they consider the unfair distribution of the revenues gained from these natural resources.

## **Military Culture**

- Most Indonesian soldiers do not differentiate between offensive, conventional, and counter-insurgency operations. The military's overarching strategy is essentially defensive, based on incorporating the population in a guerrilla war against any invading force. However, in many cases, the military has placed a priority on forcible pacification and territorial security over building public support and goodwill.
- Since the end of former President Suharto's military dictatorship in 1998, the military has been attempting to shift its traditional focus from internal security to external defense and conventional warfare, with mixed success. It will likely take many years for this change to filter down into official doctrine and the mentality of the average soldier or officer.
- The military traditionally has viewed itself as an "instrument of the nation" (alat negara) rather than "an instrument of the government" (alat pemerintah). While it has retreated from its Suharto-era political dominance, the military remains a powerful institution, convinced that it is the only true guardian of the country, the constitution, and the state philosophy, Pancasila.
- Maintaining national unity and preserving the integrity of the country are paramount concerns of the military. National integrity is such an overriding concept for the armed forces that the harsh suppression of political or religious activists can be justified if they are seen as threatening the nation's integrity or development.
- The professionalism of soldiers and units varies widely, and is dependent on the competence of the commander and his officers, the resources available to the applicable command. Most territorial units operate below authorized strength or specified levels of training.
- The military is considered a high-prestige profession, and provides a financial and professional safety net for its members. Nevertheless, the military suffers from chronic corruption, and many soldiers and units are forced to find additional sources of income during and after their service. Units often cultivate loyalty by allowing qualified personnel to remain in their assignments throughout most of their careers.
- The Indonesian military has been a secular institution for most of its history. In the past several years, the military has been influenced by the increasing degree of Islamic belief and expression displayed in Indonesian society.
- The Army is the dominant and senior service in the Indonesian military. Both the Air Force and Navy are charged with providing direct support to the Army, with their individual service missions

secondary in importance. Although there is little outright inter-service rivalry, the Army still expects deference from the other services and prides itself on its history and role in securing Indonesia's independence.

- The Indonesian Marines (Marinir) are a small but highly regarded military force. They are tasked with the traditional littoral combat mission of most Marines, but are not fully equipped or trained to conduct the range of missions of which most Western Marine forces are capable. The Marinir have been used quite frequently for intervention between factions involved in communal violence, such as the recent conflict in Ambon/Maluku.

## Cultural Intelligence for Military Operations: Indonesia

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