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In the foreword to Clifford Geertz's *The Religion of Java*, Douglas Oliver describes Geertz's monograph as the first of a series of descriptive monographs about various aspects of contemporary life in east central Java. Several others are noted, including one by Geertz's wife Hildred, signed Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959. Geertz writes in the acknowledgement a page later, 'to the other, necessarily more obscure, Indonesians, in Modjokuto and elsewhere, who in countless ways aided my work, I am very grateful, and hope that in some way this book may contribute to the realisation of their aspiration to build a strong, stable, prosperous, and democratic "New Indonesia." Signed Clifford Geertz, Berkeley 1959. Then I thought of the Berkeley Mafia I'd read about, it was a [name](#) given to a group of U.S. - educated Indonesian economists who were given technocratic positions under the New Order government established by Suharto in the late 1960s. I found a paper from a conference in Osaka in 2020, *Transgressing the Border between Academics and Politics: The CIA in the MIT Indonesia Project and Beyond*. I ctrl+f searched for Geertz's name and it appeared: 'During the cold war, particularly during the early 1950s, the Center for International Studies at MIT which was backed with plentiful funds from the CIA and the Ford Foundation had number of projects. The Indonesia Field Project was one of these. The Mojokuto Project, bestowed on MIT-CIS was one of the most successful projects due to naïve graduate students like Geertz.

Later, the fast writer and most "successful" graduate student, Clifford Geertz continued to conduct and research in Indonesia, notably in Bali and northeastern Sumatra, with support from MIT-CIS and the Ford Foundation. A different [essay](#) by Ben White discusses how Geertz would only come to address the events of 1965-1966 in Indonesia in 1995, in his autobiographical book *After the Fact*. Willem Wertheim, in *Elite perceptions and the masses: the Indonesian case* (1975) follows the naïve line, suggesting that Geertz had a chronic blindness to class inequalities in Javanese society, a vision mirroring the blindness of colonial and post-colonial elites, whose ideas of the harmonious and homogeneous village community were derived from, and promoted by, the village élite themselves (Wertheim 1975: 177-214; cf. Utrecht 1973: 280). White notes, 'there is certainly a striking lack of fit between Geertz's accounts of Javanese homogeneous rural and small-town culture and the many violent political conflicts in the region both before and after his fieldwork.'

White goes on, Geertz avoided the trend in the 1970s to place issues of class, power and history more centrally in anthropology, and had stuck to a vision of cultures as systems of locally-shared symbols (and associated practices), blinding him to questions of social differentiation, social conflict, and associates negotiations and contestations over meanings. When this variety of 'interpretive anthropology' confronts the evidence of army orchestration of, and significant foreign intervention in, a multi-sited mass murder of these proportions, local cultural explanations are at best auxiliary, and at worst redundant, as Adam Kuper has observed. Geertz was surely aware of these external forces, but his analytical framework could not cope with the interplay of local, national and international politics. These matters were beyond the scope of 'local knowledge'. I was curious in what way Geertz thought privately of the events of 1965-66 and of how Berkeley was imbricated in the later emergence of Suharto. I went back and re-read the *Conflict and Integration*

chapter of Geertz's fieldwork, particularly searching for the word communist. It emerges across fragments of conversation: 'While talking with Abdul (a *kijaji*) he said that there were a lot of "wild" religions around now, naming some of the sects in town. He said that they were all communist dominated and were a mixture of communism and "Javanese science." He said that he thought that the communist plan was to set up lots of little religions so as to generally confuse the religious situation, and then later they would say: "See, religion just disorganizes things; away with all religions!"

The other speaker started off by attacking the Communists in general terms, reading off the organizations he held were Communist dominated, and rising to heights of sheer spleen. He spoke entirely at a shout, pounded the rostrum, interrupted his speech to get the audience to shout ALLAH HU AKBAR (God is most great) back at him, attacked the "half-ripe intellectuals" who were for separation of Church and State, and in fact attacked intellectualism in general, saying that the only thing one had to do was fear God and follow the Moslem law. He attacked all non-Islamic parties as infidel and said that Muslims who joined them were breaking the rules of religion. He said that the idea of a secular state was infidel; that Indonesia should not try to learn from Russia and America, but just base its country on Islamic teachings. . . . Since the Chinese are near at hand, they make somewhat better scapegoats; but even they can't be blamed for every thing, thus, the need for local, everyday scapegoats from the Javanese community itself tends to get satisfied along religio-political lines. Fantasies (again, aside from any judgment as to their realistic elements) of *santri* persecution of non-*santris* if they come to power, of the suppression of Islam and the murder of *kijajis* if the "Communists"—a term often applied with about the same degree of accuracy as it has been recently by some of the more politically primitive elements in the United States—come to power, and other similar ones tend to account for anxiety. They also legitimize rather more open expression of hostility than the Javanese value system and patterns of etiquette traditionally allow. Such anxiety and aggression arise not only out of realistic social fears, of which there are enough, but also out of the psychologically wearing process of rapid social change. . . . "Yes, but, often men have to die to achieve justice; blood has to be shed"; and then they launched into the Communists, saying that they were anti-religion, etc. . . . One of the most important reasons for the extreme instability of the relations between Javanese and Chinese, for example, is just such an ominous coalescence of racial, economic, and religious factors all going in the same direction. The chances for open violence in such a situation are greater than in a case where the divisive aspects of racial and religious difference and inequality of wealth do not support but check one another. . . . The Communist party, as all others, is largely led by town-based clerks, not agrarian radicals. . . . Certainly the yearning for a new synthesis which will have some of the psychological and social comforts of the old syncretic unification of belief is easily to be found; it is perhaps the most widespread social sentiment and that upon which the Dar Ul Islam Moslem rebels, the Communists, and the more xenophobic nationalists all play.

Geertz describes at one stage how 'speeches of this sort are not to be taken over-literally as heralding immediate recourse to arms and violence, for they are well within the limits of permissible political hyperbole in present-day Indonesia'. I was interested in how he described the psychologically wearing process of rapid social change. In 1962 a few years after Geertz's fieldwork and before the events of 1965-1966, the U.S. government were also undertaking psychological operations in Southeast Asia, [Document 14](#), a Department of State Circular Airgram sent to the 'U.S. Embassy in Thailand et. Al' refers to a program 'initiated in the fall of 1962' to 'minimise the psychological impact of a Chinese communist nuclear detonation.' I was curious of whether Geertz also imagined the psychological worlds of Southeast Asians as different to Americans? In *The Religion of Java*, Geertz writes in an objective style of the time, area studies, cover the area, funds apportioned, document matter-of-factly over a sense of psychological depth or heat or the distance of concepts in the collision of languages or meanings. He does at a point write of an 'ominous coalescence of racial, economic, and religious factors all going in the same direction...the chances for open violence in such a situation are greater than in a case where the divisive aspects of racial and religious difference and inequality of wealth do not support but check one another' yet it also seems to not account for factors outside the local frame, the Berkeley machine or the domino paranoia.

M.N Srinivas was born in Mysore, Karnataka in the Southwest of India in 1916. He earned his doctorate in sociology from the University of Bombay (later renamed the University of Mumbai) and went on to the University of Oxford for further studies. I was interested when reading M.N Srinivas's description of how 'a member of a higher caste often goes to a rich and powerful member of a lower caste for help and advice...in a ritual context, the priest would occupy the higher position while in a secular context, the headman would occupy the higher position, in whether caste has been

read alongside Deleuze and immanence. In *The Dominant Caste in Rampura*, he describes the Non-Brahmin Movement emerging in parts of South India shortly after World War I, since the late thirties, a Western-educated non-Brahmin intelligentsia, he describes how the Brahmins were the first to sense the new economic opportunities opened to them through Western education, and they gradually moved to the towns to enter the new white-collar professions. Urban living, the cost of educating children, and the high dowries which the new education and economic opportunities had brought about, gradually caused the Brahmins to part with their land. Much of this land passed to non-Brahmins, especially the Peasants, during the years 1900-48...that 'while it is true that Peasants are not ritually high, they command respect from everyone in the village including the priestly castes of Brahmins and Lingayats.'

He also writes of how a caste enjoying one form of dominance is frequently able to acquire other forms in the course of time. Thus a caste which is numerically strong and wealthy will be able to move up in the ritual hierarchy if it Sanskritizes its ritual and way of life, and also loudly and persistently proclaims itself to be what it wants to be.' I was curious of how M.N Srinivas's work aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's work in France, ritual hierarchy diverging from an economic hierarchy, urbanisation and other social changes intersecting religious classification, the description of dominant peasants also made me think of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and strange parallels between an anti-Brahmin movement and anti-feudal movements elsewhere in the world. I was also interested in differences and variation between north and south India. On wikipedia noted next to a 'citation needed' sign, it reads:

'It was the conjuncture between Sanskritic scholarship and the strategic concerns of the Western Bloc in the aftermath of the Second World War which largely shaped South Asian area studies in the United States. During the colonial era, the Brahmins or Pandits were acknowledged as important interlocutors of Hindu laws and customs to the British colonial administration. The colonial assumptions about an unchanging Indian society led to the curious assemblage of Sanskrit studies with contemporary issues in most South Asian departments in the US and elsewhere. It was strongly believed that an Indian sociology must lie at the conjunction of Indology and sociology. His views on the importance of caste in the electoral processes in India are well known. While some have interpreted this to attest to the enduring structural principles of social stratification of Indian society, for Srinivas these symbolised the dynamic changes that were taking place as democracy spread and electoral politics became a resource in the local world of village society. By the use of terms such as Sanskritisation, "dominant caste", "vertical (inter-caste) and horizontal (intra-caste) solidarities", Srinivas sought to capture the fluid and dynamic essence of caste as a social institution. M.N Srinivas passed away in Bangalore in November 1999 at the age of 83. Clifford Geertz passed away in October 2006 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Four months later, in March 2007 Attorney-General Abdul Rahman Saleh ordered the banning and burning of fourteen history textbooks, which had challenged "accepted facts" by not stating that the PKI was responsible for the September 30th Movement.