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Peer reviewed

ETHNOLOCALITY

Tom Boellstorff

INTRODUCTION: THE SUBJECTS OF SPATIAL SCALES

Human beings have typically produced a nested hierarchy of spatial scales within which to organize their activities and understand their world ... We immediately intuit in today's world that matters look differently when analyzed at global, continental, national, regional, local, or household/personal scales (Harvey 2000:75).

The world, as David Harvey notes above, does not come with ready-made guides for interpretation; constructing such guides is incumbent not only in everyday life but scholarly inquiry, the primary topic of this essay. Exploring how linkages between localist spatial scales and conceptions of ethnicity impact Indonesianist ethnography, this essay is a preliminary set of speculations that, I hope, can contribute to critiques of 'the field' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). It responds to questions like the following: Why, when such critiques are familiar, when work on Indonesia commonly foregrounds 'modernity' and acknowledges locality's porosity, does locality reassert itself as a foundational category of knowledge? Is this epistemology and ontology an artefact of disciplinary methodology, or could the lines of causality run in the other direction, so that theories of knowledge shape fieldwork practice? Why is the idea that inhabitants of this archipelago might — at least in some domains of their lives — interpret ethnicity as contextualised by a prior sense of being Indonesian, rather than the converse, so rarely a hypothesis to be tested?

In addressing questions like these, I explore an unease concerning the proper subject of Indonesian studies. In a recent review article, Webb Keane voices this disquiet: 'Today, as anthropology anxiously discovers itself in a world of migrants, mass media, and changeable, often violent, nation-states, the presence of "Indonesia" is unavoidably real. What has fallen into doubt is the meaning of the "local" and the value of ethnographic detail' (Keane 1999:179). He emphasises that 'if we have learned anything from post-colonial critique, it is suspicion of the historical and geographical parochialism encouraged by the confinements of fieldwork. But whose frame are we accepting when we reject "the native point of view"?' (179). Note how these

statements set the presence of Indonesia apart from ethnographic detail. Keane incisively identifies a 'hint of paradox' behind this equation of locality with 'native' points of view: 'anthropology has tended to define "the social", in part, with reference to locality; think of how many familiar ethnonyms (the Balinese, Javanese, Acehnese) are in fact toponyms ... If locality is not given, of what is it constructed?' (180).

My provisional answer to this question is *ethnolocality*, a term I coin to name a spatial scale where 'ethnicity' and 'locality' presume each other to the extent that they are, in essence, a single concept. By examining this spatial scale (rendered usually as 'ethnic group' or 'tribe' (*sukubangsa, suku, etnis*) but sometimes 'region' (*daerah*) or 'community' (*kaum, masyarakat*)), I ask how the nation (and other translocal spatial scales as well) might sometimes constitute a 'native point of view' amenable to fieldwork. Can there be an anthropology of Indonesians (not only in so far as they are Javanese, Madurese, and so on)?

It is important that I forestall some possible misinterpretations of my argument. First — as my citation of Keane indicates — this essay does not point out something other scholars have missed. *I am not identifying an absence, but naming a presence.* The argument operates on a conjectural plane. My hope is that by naming a paradigm that most contemporary Indonesianist anthropological scholarship already works (if only implicitly) to demystify and deconstruct, we will find new ways of further developing our analyses of selfhood and society in the region. As a result, this is not a review essay and I do not engage in the exercise of identifying scholarship (or aspects of cultural life in the archipelago, for that matter) more or less shaped by the spatial scale of ethnolocality.

Second, I am not calling for changes in fieldwork practice to 'keep up with the times' (multi-sited ethnography, for instance); Indonesianist ethnography has proven itself quite responsive to the methodological challenges of the contemporary period. My argument is theoretical, not methodological: one can study 'Indonesians' as well as 'Javanese' or 'inhabitants of Modjokuto' from a single fieldsite. It is also possible to work in different localities or even different islands and not see such work as multi-sited if 'Indonesia' is taken as the ethnographic unit. Concerns over representativeness of sample and scope of claims are not unique to one spatial scale.

Third, I do not mean to imply that ethnolocality is unique to the Indonesian case. While for reasons of space I limit my discussion to Indonesia,

I draw briefly upon work on colonialisms in other parts of the world to situate my argument, and conclude by asking how this discussion of ethnoclocality might be of use beyond Indonesianist anthropology.

Finally, I am not calling for abandoning the ethnographic study of ethnicity, of locality, or even the intersection of the two. While I focus on scholarly conceptions of ethnoclocality, ethnoclocality is experientially real (like all spatial scales): blood can be shed over it, the most 'intimate' dimensions of personal life can be understood in its terms. Nor am I valourising 'national integration' over other forms of affiliation. My argument is additive, recognising that persons can understand themselves and their social worlds with reference to ethnoclocal and Indonesian spatial scales at the same time (and other spatial scales as well). This is demonstrated by much recent work on state-society relationships or the impact of Islam in the archipelago. This work also shows how the meanings of 'ethnicity' and 'locality' themselves vary geographically and historically. However, I do wish to sound two notes of caution. First, since ethnoclocality can exist as both an emic and etic spatial scale, there exists the possibility of 'ontological complicity' (Bourdieu 1981:306): in such a state of affairs observer and observed share a spatial scale, which is thereby naturalised. For instance, at the same time that some anthropologists define their cultural object of study in terms of administrative districts, Indonesians meet them halfway as they define cultural traits that can uniquely index such bureaucratic boundaries (Widodo 1995:8-9, 31). Second, it could happen that in the current historical moment, when the authoritarian centralism of Soeharto's 'New Order' has given way to a rhetoric of regional autonomy (*otonomi daerah*), anthropologists and others will find themselves in the position of arguing for the limits of nationalism vis-à-vis communities defined in ethnoclocal terms. The danger here is that if scholarly interest in culture during the New Order sometimes demonstrated an 'unnerving convergence' with the state's use of culture as a means of social control (Pemberton 1994:9), the dismissal of the Indonesian subject may recall a colonial problematic that denied the possibility of 'native' subjectivity beyond ethnoclocality. The overall project here, then, is to begin a conversation. While a substantial literature concerning the imagined-ness of the Indonesian nation already exists (for example, Anderson 1983; Siegel 1997), ethnoclocality is less clearly denaturalised; however, it might be that ethnoclocalities (not the nation) are the imagined communities *par excellence* under recent movements for 'regional autonomy' in Indonesia.

ETHNOLOCALITY AND COLONIALISM

Ethnolocality originated as a spatial scale of the colonial encounter, a mode of representation and control. As a form of colonial governmentality, this mode of representation was 'concerned above all with disabling old forms of life by systematically breaking down their conditions, and with constructing in their place new conditions so as to enable — indeed, so as to oblige — new forms of life to come into being' (Scott 1995:193). Spatial scales have always been a crucial aspect of these 'new conditions' of colonialism.

As a product of colonialism, ethnolocality occupies a middle ground between two other spatial scales: the overarching 'racial' distinction between coloniser and colonised on one hand, and a conception of the 'village' on the other. Racial dualism was 'the nub of the colonial system' in the Dutch East Indies: 'colonial societies are by definition internally divided. They emerge and exist, after all, in virtue of the encounter between the worlds of the colonizer and the colonized' (Van Doorn 1983:5, 3).¹ A concern to keep 'Dutch' and 'native' distinct through tropes of miscegenation and cultural contamination was central to the colonial encounter. Although in comparison to British colonialism, mixed-race persons were tolerated as part of Dutch colonial society, the regime became increasingly concerned to preserve the spatial scale of racial dualism as the ultimate grid of intelligibility for colonialism (Boeke 1953; Gouda 1995; Furnivall 1944; Stoler 1989, 1997; Van Doorn 1983).

At the opposite extreme to racial dualism lay the spatial scale of the 'village' (*desa*): 'a highly stereotyped conceptualization of peasant society as a community of cultivators living closely and harmoniously together in villages' (Breman 1982:189). Despite this portrayal of the *desa* as a timeless unit of social life, the 'village' was produced through administrative procedures and forced relocations as well as conceptual transformations: 'the village as a collective unity did not antedate the colonial state but is rather the product of it; a result of a process of localization and horizontalization that manifested itself during the course of the nineteenth century' (Breman 1982:201-202; see also Schulte Nordholt 1994:98-100). While this model of the 'village' originated on Java, where the Dutch presence was most intense, it was extended conceptually (if not always in practice) to the entire Indies. For instance, the concept was used to deemphasise the power of the nobility in Bali, implying that 'primeval Bali' was to be found at the *desa* level (Schulte Nordholt 1991:11).²

Racial dualism on one side, the 'village' on the other; these were the two extremes of a colonial 'nested hierarchy of spatial scales' that formed the conceptual underpinning of colonial rule. What was needed, however, was an intermediate spatial scale that could perform the vital task of 'mediating' (Van Doorn 1983) what colonial power construed as a plural society. Dutch rule, primarily 'indirect' and thus relying on the possibility of co-opting a pre-existing 'native' social structure, required a spatial scale between racial dualism (which treated the colony as a single unit) and the 'village' (which atomised the colony into a potentially ungovernable multitude). As a result, ethnolocality developed as an intermediate mode of representation; through it 'pluralism' became conceptualised as distinct from both the white/native divide and innumerable points of village particularity, making possible statements like 'it was not until [the twentieth] century that the question of *the plurality and duality* of colonial Indonesian society came under really serious discussion' (Van Doorn 1983:22, emphasis mine). In the Indies, like southern Africa, the colonial subject 'was containerised, not as a native, but as a tribesperson' (Mamdani 1996:22). Ethnolocality operationalised state racism, avoiding the implicit and potentially catastrophic unification of colonised persons through the white/native dualism, or the fracturing effects of the 'village'.

One of the most striking visualisations of ethnolocality was articulated in 1929 by the Dutch Resident in Bali, L. Caron: 'he pictured Balinese society as a house. Important rooms in this house were the village and the *subak* [irrigation collective], while royal rule was to provide a "protective roofing"' (Schulte Nordholt 1994:107). This architectural analogy highlights how ethnolocality was the spatial scale containerising the deeply contradictory keyword *adat* or 'customary law':

Itself a foreign term and a derivative of the Arabic word for custom, *adat*, which applies today somewhat paradoxically to that which is held to have evaded the influence of time itself, clearly developed within the historical context of a complex interaction between Dutch hegemonic ambitions, colonial practices of rule (or divide and rule), foreign religions, and the political alliances that ordered the populations of the Malay region along religious and ethnic lines (Spyer 1996:28).

As in the case of the 'village', ethnolocality received its earliest and most complete articulation on Java. As Pemberton and others have shown, the notion of courtly 'Javanese culture' is concurrent with, not anterior to, the colonial encounter. This does not mean that persons who identified as

'Javanese' were passive receptacles for Dutch concepts, any more than persons identified as 'village heads' were solely toadies for Dutch administration:³

The 'Javanese' figure ... would emerge in contradistinction to what already had been discursively construed and inscribed in Surakarta [royal] texts as its 'Dutch' counterpart. The supplementary 'Javanese' figure then would appear to counter the force of the other fashioned as 'Dutch' by fashioning itself in a certain priority as if 'Javanese culture' had always been self-evident. In short, the supplement would come first ... (Pemberton 1994:66).

And, I would add, this supplement was 'Javanese' in contradistinction not just to 'Dutch' but to other ethnocalised populations: 'Balinese', 'Achenese', and so on. As Spyer notes, *adat* took form in dialogue with a wide range of factors, including foreign religions; however, *adat* was predicated upon the containerisation of religion *within* ethnocalities (Van Doorn 1983:17). Often this took the form of subsuming Islamic law under *adat* law, or claiming that 'Islam had made few inroads into *adat*' (Lev 1985:66). Such containerisation took place because otherwise Islam could act as an overarching spatial scale, challenging the overarching racial dualism that secured colonial rule. Ethnocality, in contrast, presented the more manageable (and even potentially useful) problem of 'tribalism'. Under this colonial mode of representation, religion — like nationalism — was by definition ontologically secondary. 'Natives' would, in theory, be permitted no forms of spatial imagination beyond the *desa* and ethnocality *except* as colonial subjects. This localising process is what Agamben terms the 'sovereign exception':

the sovereign exception is the fundamental localization (*Ortung*), which does not limit itself to distinguishing what is inside from what is outside but instead traces a threshold (the state of exception) between the two, on the basis of which outside and inside, the normal situation and chaos, enter into those complex topological relations that make the validity of the juridical order possible (Agamben 1998:19).

Ethnocality marks this boundary between ruler and ruled and also between knower and known. In anthropological inquiry it became the 'investigative modality' (Cohn 1996:5) demarcating the conceptual threshold between 'ethnographic' and 'comparative'.

While *adat* could be used at the 'village' mode of representation, for instance in conceptions of the customary village or '*desa adat*' (Warren 1993:3), the Dutch identified it above all with the ethnocal spatial scale. This is because *adat* was conceived in *legal* terms and thereby presupposed the

conflation of a *class of legal subjects* with a *jurisdiction*: 'The Dutch authorities traditionally defined the *adat* laws in terms of two factors — kinship relationships and the "territorial factor", that is, the common concern of a group of people with a defined area of land' (Hooker 1978:34; see also Burns 1999).⁴

Colonial rule was predicated not on a different customary law for every 'village', nor a single customary law for all 'natives', but upon a mediating spatial scale, formed through a drawing together of bloodline and place, ethnicity and locality. *Adat* is, under this mode of representation, part of the *daerah* (area), not the *desa*. 'Adat law' (*adatrecht*), as reified by Van Vollenhoven and other members of the Leiden school, codified this conception through the concern taken to delineate conceptual 'law areas' (*rechtskringen*) or 'juridical communities' (*rechtsgemeenschappen*) for each *adat* (Holleman 1981). That the ethno-local and village levels were distinct can be seen in how language, religion, and law were rarely, if ever, construed as the exclusive property of any one *desa*. In the end, Van Vollenhoven divided the archipelago into nineteen law areas (Holleman 1981:42), roughly the *propinsi* or 'provinces' of the postcolonial state.⁵ (Groups for whom the association of ethnicity and locality was more problematic, such as 'Chinese' and 'Arabs', were classified as 'Foreign Orientals'.) While Van Vollenhoven linked these 'law areas' to kinship and ethnic groups in a variety of ways (*ibid*:45-53), a general sense developed through the Leiden school's work of a timeless '*adat* museum'.⁶

Intervening between the 'village' and the colony as a whole, ethno-locality played a vital role in anthropologising the distinction between coloniser and colonised, and thus the colonial enterprise of indirect rule: 'a locality only has meaning in relationship to a center' (McVey 1978:8). Indeed, while 'In all colonies efficient extraction implied ethnic specialization and pluralism ... few others, if any, created so exact a legal-institutional configuration of pluralism as the Netherlands-Indies' (Lev 1985:58). Ethno-locality — this 'legal-institutional configuration of pluralism' — had, like the 'village', become a thoroughly naturalised spatial scale, so that 'the impression could take root that the already existing social system was purposely left intact in order to serve as a foundation for Dutch domination' (Bremen 1982:201). By the final decades of colonial rule in Indonesia in the early twentieth century, ethno-locality was the clear counterpoint to the overarching Dutch/native divide. This was a society pluralised through ethno-locality, shaped by a series of decentralisation laws that located culture

and rule (fused through the notion of *adat*) at an explicitly ethnocultural level through concepts like departments (*gewesten*) and provinces (Benda 1966:594). Nor was the late colonial state's 'new direction' towards reifying ethnoculturality limited to Java: 'its emphasis on carefully guided evolution of the diverse ethnic *adat* communities [was enforced] especially in the islands beyond Java' (ibid:603-604).⁷ By the end of colonial rule, the *Beamtenstaat* or 'administrative state' — a racial dualism predicated on ethnoculturality — had 'triumphed in a Netherlands Indies that was far more Netherlands than were India and Burma British or the Philippines American when the soldiers of the Rising Sun at one stroke destroyed the handiwork of European colonialism in Southeast Asia' (ibid:604).

ETHNOCULTURALITY IN POSTCOLONIAL INDONESIA

Following Indonesian independence, the spatial scale of ethnoculturality lived on through colonialist legal, political, and cultural structures that were retained and transformed by the postcolonial nation-state. At the overarching 'racial' level of spatial scale, the Dutch/native dualism was transformed into the self/Other dualism that formed the basis of nationalism. The 'Indies' marked the limits of Indonesia's imagined community (Anderson 1983). The postcolonial state would also sustain and extend its colonial predecessor's use of the 'village' as means of state control, particularly in defining the target of 'development' under Soeharto's New Order. For instance, in West Sumatra, the *desa* concept would by the 1980s seriously undercut a notion of the *nagari* which linked kinship to territory in quite different ways (Kahin 1999:258-9). As during the colonial era, ethnoculturality remained a mediating 'tribal' mode of representation central to state control: 'judicial readings of *adat* law and the codes began to change, but not the basic classifications of population groups stamped into the inherited law' (Lev 1985:70).⁸

The 'Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park' or Taman Mini in Jakarta illustrates this state of affairs. This park is centered around a reflecting pool containing small artificial islands that form a map of Indonesia, surrounded by twenty-seven pavilions (one for each province or *propinsi* in existence at the time the park was built, such as 'North Sumatra' or 'West Kalimantan'). These pavilions are dominated by massive 'customary houses' (*rumah adat*), containing arts and crafts 'from each province'. While several anthropologists have discussed how this park reveals state conceptions of culture and power (for example, Pemberton 1994, Rutherford 1996, Spyer 1996), I here wish to

focus on its spatial scales. In particular, Taman Mini materialises Caron's colonial metaphor of ethnocentricity as a 'house', literally containerising and depoliticising culture. Like national maps that represent each province through a heterosexual couple in *adat* costume (Rutherford 1996:584-5), or the reference to languages other than Indonesian as 'regional languages' (*bahasa daerah*), Taman Mini draws together ethnicity and locality so that each presupposes the other. Region and *adat* are rendered isomorphic in a spatial scale that claims the mantle of ethnocentric tradition but is incomprehensible outside the reworked logic of racial dualism, the 'framework generated by the unifying agency of the state' (Spyer 1996:26). Within this framework, Indonesia is comprised of ethnocentricities: 'Javanese' (with 'Javanese' language, custom, and cosmology) live in 'Java', the 'Balinese' (with 'Balinese' language, custom, and cosmology) live in 'Bali', the 'Torajans' (with 'Torajan' language, custom, and cosmology) live in 'Torajaland', and so on.⁹ This is the same zoological trope from which anthropology obtained the concept of 'the field' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:6); after all, what is Taman Mini if not a model for a human zoo where ethnocentricities are habitats — cages for culture — and the state a zookeeper?

Under the New Order, ethnocentricity became the only state-sanctioned way to articulate difference, and 'national culture' an overarching unity (however, one no less socially real than the cultural formations associated with any other spatial scale). We see an important example of this in the 'archipelago concept' (*wawasan nusantara*; see Acciaioli 2001; Boellstorff 1999; Taylor 1994). Originating in international debates over maritime law, by the 1970s the archipelago concept had been given a distinct cast in service of the postcolonial state's claim to a 'native' legitimacy the colonial power never had: ethnocentricities were construed as islands in a state archipelago. In this formulation the proper Indonesian is archipelagic: one is a Balinese or Batak denizen only in so far as one is an Indonesian citizen ('Unity in Diversity', as the nationalist motto goes). This is the work ethnocentricity does; it is the spatial scale that underlies the legacy of 'a future anterior foresight that, in its always-already mode of production, would extend the present into the future by recalling the past "tradition"' (Pemberton 1994:188). In postcolonial Indonesia, to be 'Javanese', 'Bugis', 'Balinese', and so on *will have been* the cultural authenticator of the state. This illustrates how the colonial and postcolonial struggles for state legitimacy work through the paradox of presenting ethnocentricity (and its cultural analogue, *adat*) as ontologically prior to the nation, yet dependent on the nation for coherence; ethnocentricity is the

spatial scale meeting 'the need to produce a cultural subject that suits the national narrative of ethnicity' (Rutherford 1996:583).

The enduring influence of ethnocentricity is apparent in recent movements for regional autonomy (*otonomi daerah*) and 'ethnocentric custom' (as expressed in the concept of '*masyarakat adat*', roughly '*adat* community' (see for example, Kartika and Gautama 1999). The spatial scale of ethnocentricity has become hegemonic in the sense that even those who reject it do so through the terms of its own logic — that is, by reversing polarity and asserting ethnocentricity over the nation-state. It is thus a misrecognition informed by ethnocentricity to frame the limits of nationalism as external to the nation. Ethnocentricity can frame marginality, resistance, and even separatism in places like Aceh and the now-independent Timor Lorosae (East Timor) (Aspinall and Berger, 2001). In short, New Order efforts in 'development', education, mass media, bureaucratisation, and co-optation established ethnocentricity as 'doxa' — an apparent isomorphism between a cultural logic and the world that logic claims to describe. Such doxic 'schemes of thought and perception can produce the objectivity that they do produce only by *producing misrecognition of the limits of the cognition that they make possible*, thereby founding immediate adherence in the doxic mode, to the world of tradition experienced as a "natural world" and taken for granted' (Bourdieu 1977:164, cited in Acciaioli 1985:152, emphasis mine).

ETHNOCENTRICITY AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL INQUIRY

As indicated at the beginning of this essay, much ethnographic research taking place within the borders of the contemporary Indonesian nation-state works to show how 'local' communities are in fact constituted through interaction with translocal forces like the state, Islam, modernity, or globalising processes of various kinds. In this section I survey a few broad themes in this work and gesture towards the possibility of an anthropology that takes Indonesia as an *ethnographic* unit of analysis, constituting itself as an ethnography of *Indonesians*. Such a possibility is of particular import in the current historical moment, when the future of Indonesia is under debate. This is because ethnographic arguments for the power of ethnocentricity and against the cultural reality of the nation-state bear a disconcerting resemblance to colonial ethnology's refusal to grant 'natives' the possibility of identifying in terms of spatial scales beyond that of ethnocentricity itself. Anthropologists of the region can therefore find themselves in a state of ontological complicity with social

movements predicated on 'ethnic absolutism' (Gilroy 1993). Once again, in saying this I am not arguing that the state is not often an oppressive and violent force, particularly against groups defined as 'peripheral' or 'isolated' (*terasing*). At issue is that persons within the nation-state of 'Indonesia' identify in terms of spatial scales beyond ethnocentricity (national and transnational), and understanding their 'culture' requires taking all of these spatial scales into account, without assuming that any one spatial scale always has ontological priority. For instance, chronological priority does not necessarily mean ontological priority: a subjectivity shaped by 'global' forces (like Islam) may be experienced as more foundational than one shaped by 'local' forces. Additionally, showing the necessity of the foreign object or discourse to social life should call ethnocentricity itself into question.

For Indonesian studies, 'writing culture' has tended to mean 'writing ethnocentricity': in the implicit 'I was there' move establishing ethnographic authority, 'there' has indexed an ethnocentric spatial scale (Rabinow 1986:244). Ethnocentricity makes an ethnographic approach to Indonesia appear to overgeneralise by definition — how could we speak ethnographically of 'Indonesians'? What about Aceh, the highland peoples of Sulawesi, any group 'distant' from the physical site where the ethnographer conducts research? This way of thinking elides how all ethnographic work is based upon discerning broadly held cultural logics from intensive work with a limited number of informants and then qualifying one's claims accordingly. No ethnographer ever speaks to all persons within the spatial scale that they use to conceptualise their work, be that 'Torajan', 'Achenese', or a sub-region.

Indeed, a sense that the spatial scale of ethnocentricity is not a transparent grid for cultural analysis sometimes leads ethnographers to scale their analysis down to the level of the city or village, as when James Siegel limits his study of Solo to Solo alone (rather than Java), so as to avoid 'the tiresome duty to qualify my statements in every instance' (Siegel 1986:11; for other examples see Steedly 1999:439-40, 442). An extreme case of spatial solipsism appears in the introduction to Eiseman's *Bali: sekala and niskala*:

Since I live about six months of each year in Jimbaran, my observations are strongly influenced by practice in that particular village. In effect, this book is really about Jimbaran, Bali, and should be titled: *Jimbaran: Sekala and Niskala*. Years ago I set out to learn as much as I could about Indonesia. A decade of experience later, I decided to narrow my field to just Bali. Another decade later I thought I had better concentrate upon South Bali. A couple of years ago the field narrowed to Jimbaran. It is now becoming apparent that I had better focus only upon South Jimbaran (Eiseman 1990:xiv).

Here, the questioning of ethnocentricity seems to pull the rug out from under cultural analysis altogether. Eiseman's spatial solipsism mistakes the necessary methodological boundedness of participant observation (even if carried out in multiple 'sites') for a spatial scale of cultural meaning. Like any language, English varies greatly across region. Yet studying English in one 'locality' teaches us about English elsewhere. There are more analytical possibilities than ethnocentricity on the one hand, and spatial solipsism on the other.

It would be imprecise to say that ethnocentricity 'entered' the ethnographic study of what is now called Indonesia, since the latter was historically constituted through the former. In particular, anthropological modes of knowledge creation have been significant in the articulation of *adat* with ethnocentricity. The Leiden school of *adat* law was pivotal to setting forth not just the 'village', but also ethnocentricity as 'an almost sacred edifice' (Breman 1982:202). I am speaking here of 'The intimate relation between the Dutch colonial project, *adat* law studies, and what came to be the theoretical presuppositions of, in particular, the Leiden school of anthropology' (Spyer 1996:28). The 'starting-point of the [contemporary] Leiden Tradition' (Vermeulen 1987:5) is typically seen to be the 1935 inaugural lecture of J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong, entitled 'De Maleische Archipel als ethnologisch studieveld' ('The Malay Archipelago as a field of ethnological study') (1977[1935]). Here J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong attempted to strike a middle path for comparative structuralism between the focus on single cultures, which was rapidly becoming the hallmark of Euro-American anthropology, with the freewheeling global comparativism of Murdockian typological approaches. He claimed that the proper target of analysis should be the 'field of anthropological study' or FAS (in Dutch, *ethnologisch studieveld* or ESV). He framed these as 'certain areas of the earth's surface with a population whose culture appears to be sufficiently homogeneous and unique to form a separate object of ethnological study, and which at the same time apparently reveals sufficient local shades of differences to make internal comparative research worth while' (J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong 1977:167-8, cited in Blust 1984:21). Almost fifty years later, his nephew P. E. de Josselin de Jong, a dominant figure in the Leiden tradition for much of the twentieth century, edited a volume which concluded that the FAS concept, revised and reworked, had remained vital to anthropological work on Indonesia (see also Marschall 1988).¹⁰ In his foreword to the volume, P. E. de Josselin de Jong emphasised that 'the Indonesianist anthropologists who are in sympathy with the FAS-

approach *do not make the FAS the object of their investigation*, but they use it as a research tool' (P. E. de Josselin de Jong 1984:viii, emphasis mine).

In other words, the *veld* of the 'field of anthropological study' is not to be the field in which one does *veldwerk*. It is closer to the notion of *veld* that 'helps define anthropology as a discipline in both senses of the word, constructing a space of possibilities while at the same time drawing the lines that confine that space' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:2). Under this paradigm ethnolocality is the proper spatial scale for the production of anthropological knowledge, while 'Indonesia' is an etic, comparativist construct. Ironically, P. E. de Josselin de Jong titled his edited retrospective 'Unity in diversity: Indonesia as a field of anthropological study' (P. E. de Josselin de Jong 1984). For him, the archipelagic nationalist motto of 'unity in diversity' did not imply that Indonesia-as-field-of-anthropological-study could be a spatial scale for *veldwerk* alongside others. Only ethnolocality, by definition constitutive of diversity, could hold that position — making possible 'a discipline that loudly rejects received ideas of "the local", even while ever more firmly insisting on a method that takes it for granted' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:4).

As I noted earlier, however, much anthropological work calls into question or problematises ethnolocality. With her notion of an 'emerging metropolitan superculture' (Geertz 1963:35), Hildred Geertz was one of the first to hint at a cultural formation superimposed upon (and thus irreducible to) ethnolocality. When such work takes 'Indonesians' as the subject of study it tends to shift methodologically from ethnography to a focus on mass media, literature and the arts, politics, or political Islam. However, while — to take mass media as an example — much anthropological and historical work not founded in ethnolocality addresses mass media (for example, Adam 1995; Anderson 1983, 1999; Heider 1991; Mrazek 1997; Sen 1994; Siegel 1997, 1998), it is unclear if this is because mass media are fundamentally incompatible with ethnolocality, or simply more visibly so than other aspects of culture. The existence of local media would suggest the latter (Lindsay 1997). Studies of literature and national movements have also been at the forefront of questioning ethnolocality, sometimes with ethnographic components to the research (Bourchier 1997; Hatley 1997; Foulcher 1990; Frederick 1997; Hooker and Dick 1993; Rodgers 1995).

Linked to notions of reproduction and kinship, gender and sexuality have been means for defining the borders of ethnocalities; yet a rapidly growing body of scholarship shows how understandings of gender and

sexuality in contemporary Indonesia are often linked to spatial scales other than that of ethnocentricity (for example, Aripurnami 1996; Boellstorff 1999, 2002; Brenner 1998; Hatley 1997; Sears 1996; Sen 1998; Suryakusuma 1996; Wolf 1992). Often, women are more ethnocentricised than men — framed as those who sustain ‘traditional’ and national authenticity.

Work on ‘world religions’ in Indonesia often problematises ethnocentricity in some fashion: this is not surprising since ethnocentricity was constructed in the colonial encounter as a spatial scale *against* the translocality of Islam. For instance, Bowen analyses how by the early years of Indonesian independence some Gayo Muslims in North Sumatra ‘began to see themselves as sharing ideas, experiences, and language with their Muslim counterparts in, say, West Sumatra and East Java, and as not sharing these features with similarly educated men and women in, for example, Christian Batak areas [in North Sumatra] or Bali’ (Bowen 1993:327). Kipp’s analysis of the ‘dissociation’ of Karo Batak identity along lines of religion, migration, and ethnicity (‘Karo’ versus ‘Batak’) powerfully demonstrates the constructedness of ethnocentricity, a characteristic shared by much recent scholarship on marginalised communities (Kipp 1993: see also for example, Kahn 1993; Robinson 1993).

Work on ‘ethnicity’ itself sometimes problematises ethnocentricity. Several scholars have noted how in South Sulawesi, increasing numbers of persons identify as ‘Bugis-Makassar’, combining two Islamically identified groups speaking mutually unintelligible languages and with a history of conflict as well as coexistence (Antweiler 2001; Millar 1983; Pelras 1996). Anthropologists have also examined how at the same time that ‘Bugis’ and ‘Makassar’ coalesce in South Sulawesi, we find an increasing assertion of ethnocentricity on the part of the Torajans, a highland group whose ethnocentric status is vital for both its tourist industry and Christian identity. This despite the fact that Torajans are linguistically and culturally much closer to the Bugis than the Bugis are to the Makassarese, and despite the fact that persons in these highlands do not appear to have identified as ‘Torajan’ before the 1930s (Bigalke 1981:16; Kennedy 1953; Volkman 1984:154; Waterson 2002).¹¹ Errington shows how a coherent culture in the Luwu region of south Sulawesi consists of a Bugis-speaking aristocracy and a Torajan-speaking peasantry, none of whom identify as Bugis or Torajan *per se*, but instead via the ethnocentric term ‘ToLuwu’, largely on the basis of a shared Islamic faith (Errington 1989:18).

We see similar dynamics elsewhere in Indonesia. Noting that ‘the relative absence of the coastal peoples of Kalimantan from ... the ethnographic record of Indonesia is most likely due to the manner in which the anthropological romance with Borneo, rather than Kalimantan, has been conducted’ (2000:24), Hawkins reminds us that the *Hikajat Bandjar* chronicle actually makes no mention of ‘Banjar’ ethnic identity, instead framing social structure in terms of sociopolitical allegiances (27).¹² She shows that contemporary understandings of being Banjar are strongly impacted by Islam, but that Muslim identity also links Banjar identity to being ‘Malay’. Contrary to fantasies of the contaminated urban opposed to the untouched ethnolocal indigene, work along these lines shows how ethnocentricity is, if anything, more solidly entrenched in ‘out-of-the-way’ places, where state presence, and responses to that presence, can be significant social dynamics (see, for example, Acciaioli 1985; Keane 1997; Spyer 1996; Tsing 1993; Volkman 1984).

CONCLUSION: THE STAKES OF ETHNOLOCALITY

In the wake of the collapse of Soeharto’s New Order, we find some scholars critiquing ‘Indonesian studies’ for reifying Indonesia as a unit of analysis (Philpott 2000). In this essay I have argued that, as far as anthropology is concerned, the danger is not going far enough — not taking Indonesia seriously as a unit of ethnographic analysis, no more or less problematic than any other spatial scale. It is certainly insufficient to assume that persons within the nation-state of Indonesia see themselves as ‘Indonesian’ in all circumstances. However, it is equally problematic to fall back on ethnocentricity as the default mode of representation for culture, naturalising a spatial scale that was not just a result of colonialism, but ‘the very form of colonial rule’ (Mamdani 1996:185). If an ultimate goal of Pemberton’s work is to demonstrate that the subject of Java is really a subject of ‘Java’, my analysis here has a complementary project: to erase the implicit ‘scare quotes’ and show that the subject of ‘Indonesia’ is a *subject of Indonesia* — amenable to an ethnographic analysis with strengths and limitations not fundamentally different from those found in ethnography conducted with reference to any other spatial scale.

While I have restricted myself to the Indonesian case, the global character of the colonial project and now the nation-state paradigm mean that spatial scales similar to ethnocentricity can be found in other parts of the world.

In Malaysia, for instance, something like ethnocentricity may shape debates over ethnicity, so that 'No longer is the mere conversion of a person to Islam said to make that person *masuk* Melayu, to become a Malay. Now conversion means to *masuk* Islam, to become a Muslim, as Malays recognise that religion and ethnicity are not isomorphic' (Nash 1989:25-6; see also Nagata 1974). We find modes of representation like ethnocentricity in the 'mythico-histories' of Hutu refugees in Tanzania (Malkki 1995), the 'ethnostalgia' by which Guatemalans understand Maya indigeneity (Nelson 1996), and the 'cultural fundamentalism' (Stolcke 1995) and 'ethnic absolutism' (Gilroy 1993) on the rise in contemporary Europe.

It might seem that in Indonesia's current climate of ethnic conflict and decentralisation, ethnocentricities are becoming more real and the nation more poorly imagined. However, I would argue that it is precisely in this historical moment that a critique of ethnocentricity is most urgently needed. It is at moments when our descriptions of the social world seem utterly at one with that world that a critical perspective is of greatest import. What might be the implications, for instance, of recent debates in South Sulawesi over 'ethnic' (*etnis*) traditions of democracy that assume there are four *etnis* in the region — Makassarese, Buginese, Torajan, and Mandar — but leave out Chinese, Javanese, and others? To critique ethnocentricity is not to deliver an apologia for the nation, nor is it to deny the importance of the conceptual work ethnocentricity performs in contemporary Indonesian life. It is, instead, to write against the foreclosure of debate, to open a space from which to imagine new geographies of identification, to equip oneself to better respond to an already globalised world. It is to refuse a primordialist teleology in which a supposed inevitable resurfacing of ethnicity forever haunts social life, and to ask instead: of what stuff are dreams made? How do we (and those 'we' see as Other) think and embody our daily lines of affiliation and difference? How might we imagine another world — not necessarily to bring that world into being, but as a way to cast new light and new shadow on the taken-for-granted, and so to grant ourselves the possibility of new ways of living in the deep traces of our history?

NOTES

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¹ I take the term 'racial dualism' from Mamdani (1996:7).

² The 'village' thereby became 'an important cornerstone of colonial rule over the island'; it 'led in official reporting to the assumption of a 'traditional' Javanese community which remained current until decolonization and indeed for some time afterwards' (Bremant 1982:196). This was the case even though there is strong evidence that in Java 'the village was never organised according to genealogical principles' (Bremant 1982:206). Instead, hierarchical relations that bore little relationship to geography were the norm; these relations were typically calculated not in terms of land, but in terms of control over persons and thus labour capacity (Onghokham 1978:115).

³ Notions of what it means to be 'Javanese' were thus always contested (Hefner 1996).

⁴ Key to this was the idea that land was to be held communally: 'Landrent had been introduced into Java during the English interregnum (1811-16) by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, who gleaned many of his ideas on the subject from the land revenue systems of British India' (van Niel 1992:6).

⁵ The exact number of *propinsi* in contemporary Indonesia is in flux but is approximately thirty. This spatial scale was first codified in the colonial-era Decentralization Law of 1922 (Benda 1966:594).

⁶ 'Although [Van Vollenhoven] and others always insisted that they did not want to erect an *adat* museum in Indonesia, this is what their work tended to do ... as *adat* law was understood theoretically to persist best in the closed community, the *adat* researchers tended to write as if local communities *were* closed' (Lev 1985:66, italics in original).

⁷ 'The principle of systematic territorial decentralization was implicitly abandoned in favour of a new form of indirect rule in which the ethnic group, styled the *groepsgemeenschap* (group community) in the bill of 1936, was to become the main administrative unit ... these were the most basic old units now clad in a spuriously new garb ... ethnicity and not territoriality formed the basis of the new look' (Benda 1966: 601-2).

⁸ It therefore seems possible that, as in Africa, ethnocentricity 'cannot provide a basic reference point for postcolonial political areas, because it is itself constantly being formed and is largely mingled within the phenomenon of the State, for which it is supposed to provide the explanatory key' (Bayart 1993:49).

⁹ I purposely choose these three examples to show how ethnocentricity sometimes appears as isomorphic with the 'province' (Bali), sometimes sub-provincial (Torajan), and sometimes super-provincial (Java). Regardless, however, what we find is a spatial scale mediating between 'Indonesia' and the 'village'.

¹⁰ He also asserted the utility of the FAS concept in an article written four years earlier (P. E. de Josselin de Jong 1980).

¹¹ As late as 1949-50, Raymond Kennedy would refer to his informants primarily as 'people of the Sadang area' and only occasionally as 'Toradja people' (see Kennedy 1953:29-44).

¹² Some persons in Java and other parts of the archipelago identify in terms of 'village' as well as ethnocentricity (Hawkins 2000:32; see Bruner 1974:161; Hefner 1985:41).

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