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## **Indonesia: On the hunt for more (1992)**

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## **VII. INDONESIA**

The process of getting to Indonesia is so daunting that when you arrive, you have a sense of being born into the country. By historic standards, such a notion is absurd. It would have taken previous generations months to travel to the South Pacific. However, now the method of arriving in Jakarta is the same as arriving in, say, Pittsburgh—you step off an airplane.

The difference is that you have been traveling for more than 36 hours, 25

of them locked under pressure in an airplane above water, much of it in darkness. You have crossed 12 time zones and the International Date Line, and changed two calendar days. You have flown five hours from Washington to Los Angeles, had a five-hour layover, and then flown from L.A. to Tokyo for more than 11 hours through the night, gaining a calendar day.

While sweeping low across the ocean approaching Tokyo you may have thought of Jimmy Doolittle and his bombers spending 30 Seconds Over Tokyo. You will see snow-covered mountains on the dark horizon, and you may notice in the illuminated carpet below dozens of diamond gems of green baseball fields where thousands at that very moment were molding their character into a universal symmetry held nearly sacred by many Americans. After walking around Narita Airport for an hour, you flew another five hours to Singapore, where you went by cab to a hotel for a shower, two hours of sleep and a meal, and then awakened into a new day for another hour's flight to Jakarta. There you stepped off the plane into the steaming equatorial air at 9 a.m. exhausted yet expected to be coherent for at least another 10 hours.

On these voyages, the person who greets me at the airport is my colleague Simon Juntak. Simon is thick and broad, has black hair, dark skin, wide almond shaped eyes and a very wide face. He is a five and a half foot tall fireplug. Simon was graduated from the University of North Sumatra in Medan, his hometown, and after 10 years in the Indonesian Foreign Service came to work for Mobil Oil Indonesia in the mid-1970s in personnel and government liaison.

Simon has several children, the oldest of which is studying at a university in Tokyo. He is a Christian, like 10 percent of the Indonesian population. Simon is widely traveled and possesses a cosmopolitan view of the world. We have traveled together in the U.S., once staying in Bakersfield, California, home to the largest domestic oil fields in the U.S., and where we enjoyed barbecued ribs together one evening listening to country and western music.

"How is my handsome boss?" he said, his standard greeting. I am not handsome and not his boss. He was gracious, a trained diplomat who wished to get along and who would take any step he needed to avoid unnecessary difficulties with a trusted colleague who was, after all, just another visiting boulee (white face).

Simon's character is a blend of the new and the old. For example, when in Europe for an international gas conference last spring he was mugged in an East Berlin department store by a knife-wielding Vietnamese immigrant. Simon quickly got the better of the would-be bandit and pummeled him into submission, even holding the man for arrest by Berlin police. The Vietnamese had made the mistake of selecting Simon as his victim, unaware that Simon's central identity is that he is a Batak from North Sumatra, a descendant of man-eaters.



One of the Indonesians who worked for Simon is named Andi, also a native of Medan, whose dark skin and Aryan features mirror his ancestors who came to Sumatra from India centuries ago. A simple man about to retire, Andi once lived in New York City working with Mobil in drilling technology. He had long since returned to Jakarta. Five years earlier, he became the editor of the local employee newspaper. His retirement ends this career mismatch, the professional results of which have occupied much of my time.

Andi said that when he was growing up he knew more about America than anyplace else because he was taught with American textbooks. Andi confidently quoted Abraham Lincoln and explained often that the U.S. Declaration of Independence was a critical ingredient in Indonesia's own revolution against the Dutch after World War II.

Indonesian independence is important to Andi and he believed Suharto, who came to power in a coup 25 years ago, has been good for his country. Andi had no problem with Indonesian expansionism. Andi knew this got me stirred up. He joked about how all Indonesia should do is annex the eastern half of New Guinea (a former Australian colony, now an independent country called Papua New Guinea), or the northern portion of the island of Kalimantan (which the rest of the world calls Borneo) where Malaysia and the gas rich duchy of Brunei have jurisdiction.

After lunch one day, Andi was explaining this foreign policy objective to me once again and used the map in Simon's office to show just what he had in mind. Simon, the Batak, whose kinsmen are prominent in the military, and whose ancestors near Lake Toga in Sumatra were famed as fearless and aggressive warriors, came over and pointed to that northern section of the island of Kalimantan that was shaded as a Malaysian province.

"This offends me," said Simon. He was serious; believing that this province rightly belonged in the Indonesian federation. Simon saw my unease at this aggressive talk and took his point one step further. "And Singapore, too," Simon said, smiling, now teasing me.

Andi did not understand that Simon was by that time having fun with me.

"And Malaysia," said Andi, seriously, as he closely inspected the borders on the map.



Indonesians have no sense that their treatment of people within their archipelago is anybody's business. On November 12, 1991, in Dili, East Timor, locals and their supporters held a mass demonstration protesting Indonesia's invasion of the former Portuguese colony in 1975 and annexation in 1976. Conquest wars have killed thousands and strong-armed dissidents. During a demonstra-

tion against these horrors last November, the army got out of hand. Soldiers fired into the crowd. Official tallies are unreliable. Perhaps more than 100 were killed. In the crowd and witness to this massacre were a writer for New Yorker magazine, an American radio journalist who was beaten, and the son of an American journalist who was killed in the gunfire. The journalist later wrote an eloquent essay about her son's death in the *Wall Street Journal*, effectively putting the bad behavior of Indonesia on the First World agenda, where it remains.

The United Nations has taken up an investigation into the shooting. In response, the Netherlands has cut off foreign aid to Indonesia. The people of Indonesia couldn't care less: Keep your Dutch money. There is bad blood on this. For the Dutch, who held Indonesians in their boney red grip for three and a half centuries, and who set one tribe against another in seemingly endless wars of "pacification," and whose blood-stained hand on the archipelago was only loosened after a brutal war of rebellion in the late 1940s, for these same Dutch to somehow now scold Indonesians for their clumsy efforts at nation building is almost comical.

Because of its lack of interest in listening to former colonists tell it how to behave, the Indonesian government is prepared to continue to persecute East Timor any way it likes until that region is safely in the Indonesian fold. Indonesia plans, among other things, to jail the leader of the National Resistance of East Timorese Students for 15 years for inciting riots. Among the student's crimes was sending a letter on May 1, 1991, to President Bush seeking U.N. intervention to protect East Timor's independence. *The New York Times* editorial writers wonder why, if the U.N. can go to war with Saddam Hussein over Kuwait, there's a problem with protecting East Timor from Indonesia.



Mobil, then called Standard Oil of New York (Socony) and part of the Standard Oil Trust created by John D. Rockefeller, began selling lubes in Java in 1898. It wasn't until 70 years later that Mobil began exploration work and discovered the 15 trillion-cubic-foot Arun natural gas field—one of the largest in the world—three years later. Arun, this mammoth gas field, is located in Aceh Province, on the extreme western tip of the island of Sumatra, which is inhabited by a people who are the most devout Muslims in the country. The Acehnese never accepted Dutch colonial rule and today they don't much like the Javanese either.

A production sharing contract (PSC) between Mobil and Pertamina, the state oil and gas enterprise, was signed in 1973, and the Arun field has been producing since 1977. Mobil started with seven Indonesia employees in 1967. Today it employs 1,252 Indonesians and about 92 boulee/ex-pat types. By

1992, the Arun field was producing 2.2 billion cubic feet of gas, 118,000 barrels of liquid condensate, and 8,450 cubic meters of liquefied petroleum gas every day. Arun supplies 25 percent of the entire market in the Pacific Rim, represents half of all the gas exported by Indonesia and is an essential energy source for Japan, which relies on natural gas. Mobil produces as much gas in the Arun field as it produces in the entire United States.

Japanese utility companies, which supply Japanese industry, are eager that Arun's energy supplies continue uninterrupted. The thought that natural gas supplied might one day diminish sends jolts of panic through the Japanese economic nervous system. Natural gas must continue to flow. If it doesn't, Japan will need to invest in alternate supply sources, which means billions in new investments to them, and the potential loss of billions to the Indonesians.

Such investments have wide ranging consequences to customer, supplier and middleman. The Arun gas field, developed by Mobil, now has 55 wells with plans to expand to 82 wells, which tie into seven collection clusters. The gas is piped to a gas plant called PT Arun, where a gleaming plant on the beaches of Sumatra's northernmost coastline employs about 1,400 processing the gas for sale aboard liquefied natural gas (LNG) tankers that ship the product to Japan and Korea.

To keep production up, Mobil is spending \$721 million on a booster compression project; \$245 million in 1991 and \$476 million in 1992. All this will keep the gas and money stream flowing for another five years. But if within 10 years more gas is not discovered to feed the PT Arun plant, the entire operation will disappear like Tombstone or Silver City. Aceh, home to the most fiercely independent people of Indonesia, may be forced to return to the same economy that sustained the local people who greeted the Islamic invaders from Arabia 1,000 years ago.



The Acehenese are but one ethnic group in Indonesia, residing in that country's extreme western end. Nearly 200 million people who come from 300 different ethnic groups reside on 6,000 islands that stretch across 3,000 miles in the waters north of Australia and south of Indochina and the Philippines, land areas more easily envisaged by Americans because of the permanent impressions of British and American heritage and wars. The world almanacs call Indonesia the fifth most populous nation in the world, yet only 6,000 of the country's 17,000 islands are populated. With the break up of the USSR, Indonesia now is fourth-largest in the world, behind China, India and the U.S.

The way most of the world knows Indonesia is through the names of its larger islands: Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan (Borneo) and Bali. Other large island groups are Sulawesi and Irian Jaya. Bali was the site of James Michener's South Pacific. Java, famous for coffee, is one of the most populous islands in the

world, with half of Indonesia's people residing on that strip of land 700 miles long. Sumatra is larger than California and has been the stuff of travelogues for more than a century. Sulawesi, also called the Celebes and near the Molucca Islands, are all the original Spice Islands and were Columbus's target when he set sail in 1492 and accidentally unleashed European domination of America. Indonesians resent the name Borneo, preferring Kalimantan. The only "wild men of Borneo" they recognize are the Malaysians and Bruneians, whom Indonesians believe should not hold any sway on their island. At the eastern end of Indonesia is the province of Irian Jaya. It and its capital, Jayapura, were familiar landmarks during World War II when MacArthur put his command HQ there and U.S. Marines slogged through the New Guinea beaches and jungles to root out the Japanese, who, among other things, built 200 landing strips on Irian Jaya as part of their efforts to create the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.

The people who reside along this vast stretch of islands are an ethnic kaleidoscope. Each of the distinct ethnic groups in the thousands of islands in Indonesia is proud of its original identity. In addition to the Acehnese in northwest Sumatra; there are Simon's people, the Batak, from the Lake Toba region in North Sumatra; there are South Sumatrans, Javanese, the Hindi Balinese, the Dayak of Kalimantan with the elongated earlobes and blackened teeth; the dark skinned Ambons from the Moluccas and Spice Islands; the Christian Manado from North Sulawesi; the dark skinned Irian Jayans.

Also on Irian Jaya are the primitive Dani, the 100,000 Negrito aboriginal peoples of Grand Baliem Valley in the Irian Highlands who were first seen by Americans only 50 years ago. The Dani are a Stone Age people who keep mummified ancestors from three centuries ago positioned in places of prominence in their grass and mud huts. A visitor may be obliged to greet and honor such an ancestor. The men and women both dress their hair in feathers and colored paste and foliage. For the rest of their garments, a woman might wear a grass skirt but a man will always wear a carved gourd or hollowed wooden branch as a sheath to cover his penis. A visitor takes great care never to look a Dani woman in the eyes and must never be alone with a Dani woman, say, on a mountain path. This is an act of such extreme disrespect you would likely be killed, boiled and eaten.

Though members of their particular ethnic group, however, all share a common sense of being Indonesian. This sense of unity has been created by a shared colonial experience, but also through the political artfulness of the dominant people presiding over this cultural brew, the Javanese. The Javanese, who make up half of the population, possess the social, political, and organizational skills necessary to orchestrate, manipulate and dominate the people of this archipelago in ways the English or Japanese, say, would understand well in their own corners of the world.



The outside world helped stitch the islands of Indonesia together, first through migrations that brought the world's learning and trades in wave after wave atop indigenous peoples, and finally through the acts of Dutch colonialists eager for secure trade.

From 3000 BC to 500 BC Malays from South Asia brought stone, bronze and Iron Age cultures and Austronesian language to the islands. From about 200 BC to 20 AD the peoples conducted trade with China and by the first century were trading with South India. With the Indian trade many Indo-Aryan tribes relocated with their trade to Indonesia and for more than six centuries, brought their Hindu and Buddhist religions, cultures and customs.

These cultures created two powerful kingdoms: Sriwejaya in Sumatra from 600 to 800 AD, and Majapahit kingdom, which ruled East Java from 1000 to 1600. Islam was introduced to Indonesia when Arabs traders landed in Aceh and Northern Sumatra in 846 AD. By the 16th century, Muslim kingdoms rose in Java and spread throughout the islands, becoming dominant everywhere except Bali, where Hindu religion and customs remained.

As for the Europeans, Marco Polo explored the Indonesia archipelago on his way to China in 1292. In 1492 Columbus was looking for the Spice Islands when he sailed west from Europe. Portuguese looking for spices came in the 16th century, and maintained a presence in Timor. The Dutch followed in 1605 and established the Dutch East India Company, founding a city on Java they called Batavia, and which today is called Jakarta, one of the most populous cities in the world.

The Dutch were a successful colonial power for 350 years, dominating trade and government in stages along the archipelago. The British were eager to counter the Dutch influence and took advantage of the opportunity offered by the Napoleonic Wars, when Holland was occupied by France from 1811 to 1816. Seizing the advantage and eager to protect maritime trade routes between China and India, Britain took control of Indonesia while the Dutch were preoccupied at home with the French. A dashing Brit named Sir Thomas Stamford Bringley Raffles became a vice governor of Java during that time. After a British peace with Holland, Raffles moved to Sumatra where from 1818 to 1824 he set up a base for the British East India Company. From this locale, Raffles served the crown as part of the Straits Settlements office, reporting to the Indian Raj. Among his reports were surveys on the locals, including descriptions of the Batak as fierce man-eating warriors, a tag the rest of the world has hung on the Batak (including Simon) ever since.

Britain, eager to protect its opium markets in China, wanted to control the Strait of Malacca, a waterway that separates the Malay Peninsula from the island of Sumatra. As far as the British were concerned, the Spice Islands to

the east were too much under the Dutch influence, so Raffles moved the British base to Singapore, a small island just east of Sumatra and at the tip of the Malay Peninsula. From then on the Dutch and British held the Straits of Malacca open to sea traffic for both, with the Dutch controlling the south and the British the north.

British concentration on Singapore and Malaysia made those parts more familiar to the wider English-speaking world. Singapore became a stopover for literary types who made the romantic-sounding name Raffles famous and who told stories of colonial life where gin and tonics were served on the graceful verandahs of tropical estates by exotic natives. Singapore fell into the imperial orbit of England and was cast as Fortress Singapore before the Japanese takeover during World War II. In 1946 Singapore became a crown colony and in 1965 an independent state.

As for Indonesia, the Dutch were able to fend off other European exploitation of the islands by refusing all non-Dutch trade. The sole exception was Portugal, which was able to keep a toehold in the eastern portion of Timor island, which is south of the Celebes and Spice Islands and north of Australia.

The only hiatus from Dutch colonial rule until independence was the three and a half years during World War II when Japan ruled Indonesia. At first the Indonesians welcomed their Asian brothers as liberators, but within weeks they learned otherwise.

Explained Simon: “Three and a half years of the Japanese made us forget three and a half centuries of the Dutch.”



For Indonesia, discovering new natural gas fields is a critical national goal. They want to continue to dominate the Pacific gas market and keep Japanese customers happy. There are national security reasons, too.

From Aceh in the west to Irian Jaya in the east, the government must demonstrate to domestic skeptics that no matter how remote a province you are within the Indonesian community, the Javanese government in Jakarta can deliver the goods. To make this point, outfits like Mobil come in handy.

At its simplest, the extreme ends of the archipelago, Aceh and Irian Jaya, are the most remote from Javanese control. In the case of Aceh, the situation is complicated by the historic nature of the province itself, which has as its name “The Special Province of Aceh.” The Javanese allowed the Acehnese to call themselves “Special” because they were never colonized by the Dutch and successfully withstood armies of Dutch, Javanese and Sumatrans who over the generations made repeated efforts to subjugate Aceh. Among the famous photos used in the local histories is a black and white image of Dutch colonial soldiers and their Javanese troops standing amid scores of dead Acehnese, with

arms, legs, heads and torsos scattered about the feet of these soldiers who proudly displayed their handiwork for a colonial camera.

The Acehnese have not integrated well into wider Indonesian society, remain apart from the mainstream to the east and suffer as a consequence. When waiting in the airport at Lhuk Sukon one afternoon, Simon and I were trying to identify which of the passengers to Medan were Batak, which Javanese, which Acehnese and so forth. Simon had no trouble. He pointed out one young man who he said was typical Acehnese: He wore tattered, ill-fitting clothing; his skin color was dark and his hair wavy and long. To Simon, however, there were less visible things.

“Besides,” Simon instructed, with a laugh, “look at his stupid face.”

Acehnese are devout Muslims. The Javanese are careful to make sure they are pacified. Religious extremism isn't tolerated in Indonesia, and the government wants to head off any effort at an Islamic state. Yet here is trouble. Marijuana farmers in the Aceh boonies want to grow and sell the weed to make money on the international drug market. They occasionally kill police over the matter, who then retaliate. Islamic guerrillas based across the strait in Malaysia sail across to foment rebellion and conduct random terrorist attacks against federal targets. These conflicts claim about 500 lives a year. Occasionally in the early morning light, dead bodies appear in the streets of Lhokseumawe or Lhuk Sukon near the Arun field, victims of either the Acehnese guerrillas or the Indonesian secret police. You can tell which is which by the way the hands are tied behind the victim's back. This sign serves as a warning to the locals about who did what.

The vagaries of geology thrust Mobil into playing a role in this balancing of relations because the Arun gas production brings in millions in income, provides employment for tens of thousands, and funds health care, education and other social services for the Acehnese. It also is one of the reasons Jakarta will never permit Aceh to be independent.

Shortly after I came to this job, I got a call from a researcher from Asia Watch, who told of two employees of the Arun plant who were kidnapped by the secret police and were not heard from again. The caller wanted Mobil to confront the government over this and other human rights abuses (which Asia Watch had enumerated in exquisite and, it turned out, truthful detail) and demand the prisoners' return and government adherence to U.N. conventions. When I discussed this with my colleagues, they laughed.

One asked me bluntly: “Do you think the Indonesian government gives a shit what we think?”

All the Indonesians want from Mobil is to keep Arun producing gas. And our shareholders want us to be a good neighbor, sure, but we also must avoid trouble that might interrupt production. To do this Mobil must avoid being a target of either federal or provincial hostility. My assignment is to help orches-

trate a very elaborate program to make sure locals value the Arun operations more than their hatred of Jakarta, and also coordinate this good neighbor-balancing act so that it helps relations between Jakarta and the U.S.

Aceh is one of 27 provinces in Indonesia. Each province is ruled by a governor, who is appointed by President Suharto. Governing authority under the governors is divided into districts, which are run by a bupati, with subdistricts run by a chammat, and villages headed by a kepala desa. For Mobil to operate in any province, it must get along with each of these people and figure out what they want and whether the company can do it. After years of figuring all this out, the Mobil plant in Aceh now supports scholarships for technical apprentice programs at the area's three high schools and funds university scholarships for worthy students, as well as scholarships for advanced degree training for hundreds of Indonesians both at home and in the States. Mobil supports the usual number of cultural, arts and music festivals that tour the world.

The plant also assists in controlling drainage in the area. Normal maintenance of Arun field drainage system every year has the effect of maintaining the rice farm irrigation system. This enables farmers to keep ready access to irrigation despite annual silt buildup. The Mobil people have also drilled 25 water wells near schools throughout the area so far, and continue to drill two to three new water wells each year and make them available to everyone.

My favorite program is a string of medical clinics, which we call the Civil Health Mission. More than 110,000 residents near the plant are served by two clinics, where family planning, prenatal care and nutrition are preached. Started in 1983, the clinics are located near the Mobil employee housing compound and in Paya Bakong in nearby Lhokseumawe. These clinics have an average of 113 visits a day, 2,650 visits a month. The clinics not only serve the Mobil and plant employees and their families, they are also available to the 122,474 people of the Arun Subdistrict, one of the 22 subdistricts within the Regency of North Aceh. The Regency of North Aceh has a population of 774,127. Since the nurse-training program was set up in 1986, the clinics have in concert with the local community college trained 467 nurses, of whom 315 are female.

The clinics make three doctors, six nurses, four midwives, two lab techs, and one secretary available to each community. These people conduct regular programs of immunization, nutrition informational prenatal care. The most effective program is family planning, which earned the clinics an award from President Suharto in February 1991. A conference of medical directors from the Muslim world met in Jakarta recently, and the Indonesian government brought a group to Aceh to show them the Mobil clinics and how family planning and nutrition are handled in this most fundamentalist community. The conference said these clinics were a model for the Muslim world.

It's also cheap: The entire medical program for Arun employees and residents costs Mobil \$300,000 a year. The program has been so successful the

Aceh governor, and local bupati, chammat and kepala desa (the entire government) wants Mobil to continue to operate the provincial health system rather than do it themselves, which long range is bad government but short range is good community relations.

In Jakarta, the government wants the plant to help pay for the upkeep of some of the soldiers stationed in Aceh. In 1989, the company donated \$5,000 to defray food expenses for the army. In 1991, the cost was \$250,000.

These payments and programs are small in exchange for ensuring calm. Look what the corporation gets: Mobil Oil Indonesia earned about \$600 million in income last year for the corporation's shareholders. The Arun gas field will be depleted in 10 years, and that vital income stream will fall like a stone. Mobil is currently spending more than \$500 million on booster compressors in the Arun field to maintain gas production for the next five years. But the need to find more gas to keep that Arun LNG plant running is critical. There isn't panic in the boardrooms yet, but we're getting close.



With the Javanese wanting the Arun field producing to maintain peace in western most Aceh Province, they also don't want to neglect the easternmost province of Irian Jaya.

The province is the western half of the island of New Guinea, a huge island area north of Australia. Australians long ago colonized the island's eastern half, while the western half remained largely the domain of Dutch adventurers and missionaries for 300 years. During World War II, Japanese soldiers occupied Irian Jaya and built at least 200 landing strips throughout the island. The Japanese were killed or chased away when the U.S. Marines took over in 1943. MacArthur used Irian Jaya's capital, Jayapura, as his headquarters for the Allied Pacific command. After the war, the only colonials to return were Dutch missionaries, who to this day remain in the bush and among the most dependable, if only, pilots to remote areas. These Dutch were protected by a garrison or two of Dutch soldiers who offered token resistance to the Indonesian military when Jakarta decided it wanted to take the land 25 years ago.

Earlier in Nigeria, I had met a British photographer named Bowater who had lived in the Papua New Guinea half of the island in the late 1960s and early 1970s when PNG was getting on its feet after Australian colonial rule. Bowater was an expert in agriculture and after many years reluctantly concluded it was beyond his talents to get the PNG people to emerge with anything approaching modern agriculture in his lifetime. Instead, he became a photographer. While in PNG, he watched from across the border as the Indonesian army invaded Irian Jaya to forcibly evict the remaining Dutch colonial armed forces and "pacify" resistance to Indonesian rule.

"The Indonesian government is evil," Bowater explained, without the

slightest hint of irony. “They dropped napalm on Irian villages, thinking nothing of it.” Estimates today are that the war to annex Irian Jaya 25 years ago cost perhaps 20,000 lives. Of course, after the 1965 coup in which Suharto took over from Sukarno and began an anti-Communist purge, the estimates of the dead were 300,000 in that bloodletting. Most of victims were ethnic Chinese, who may have met their end less for any political view than being the still-hated foreign devils who remain prominent in commerce throughout the archipelago. Who can know the truth of such things in a closed world?

I once asked Simon what the Indonesians had against Chinese. This was a question of ignorance. He explained that the Chinese didn’t want to integrate and become Indonesians, that they retained their culture and language, were secretive and kept to themselves in enclaves, and, though successful in business, exploit Indonesians.

“I once was asked to work for Chinese in Medan,” Simon explained. “They wanted to pay me blood money to exploit my people.”

“Come on, Simon,” I scoffed, hoping to rekindle the cosmopolitan diplomat I knew he was.

Simon was adamant. “How can you trust a snake?”

Since the bloodletting in the 1960s, the government has worked to bring Irian Jaya into the fold through propaganda, investment incentives and migration programs aimed at encouraging poor folks with few prospects from Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi to relocate to Irian and settle. For the rest of Indonesia, Irians, dark skinned and poor, are country bumpkins, ignorant and the butt of jokes. Their province is a poor relation. This is the kind of terrain that causes outfits like Mobil to react like a tomcat smelling raw fish.



In the mid 1980s, the Indonesian government made a political decision to encourage economic development of its most eastern portion. The “Go East” program had many facets: tourism, population resettlement, economic development, and business incentives. Pertamina and the government agency that supervises all foreign investments (whose long name is known through its acronym, BPPKA), established three “blocks” for the purpose of oil and gas development. These blocks were called Babo (3.9 million acres), West Lengguru (3 million acres), and East Lengguru (2.8 million acres). Mobil obtained PSCs for the East and West Lengguru blocks in 1988, and for the Babo block in 1990.

The process leading up to an oil or gas exploration well goes basically like this: First you obtain a producing sharing contract (PSC) from Pertamina for a certain block of land. Throughout Indonesia, Mobil has eight PSCs, with three now in Irian Jaya. Parameters vary. The PSCs usually have a time limit, say, five years, a minimum commitment on the part of the contractor to con-

duct so much geological seismic work (and give the government the information), drill so many wells, or spend so much money on an undetermined number of wells. If there is a discovery, depending on whether it is oil, gas or condensate, there are minimum reserve thresholds that must be met, minimum production levels, and determinations about how much a contractor can keep at what level of production, and how much profit you can earn and the like. For all these various elements, there are basic industry formulas that are agreed to in any PSC. They vary a bit from country to country, but not much. With the exception of the U.S. government, which does not honor such contracts and runs the single hardest geography to do this kind of exploration work, the countries of the world have a universal consensus on such PSCs so that all areas remain basically competitive and no one country is able to attract all the oil and gas investment. For a range of reasons, most of them environmental, the U.S. has reached a consensus that it doesn't want to be in the oil and gas development business any more; the people would rather have any eyesores, natural disturbances and risks of pollution be located in somebody else's back yard. Oh, yes, Americans also want cheap gasoline all the time; but that's another story.

Once a company has the basic PSC, the next step is the geological analyses. This seismic work can involve sound wave technology, or, in the case of Irian Jaya, surface evaluation of stones and outcroppings not unlike work that was done 70 years ago, before seismic technology. This is grueling work, requiring geologists to walk through uncharted jungles in the densest rain forest and bush and live apart from civilization for weeks at a time. All the while you are aware that you are surrounded by natives who can be man-eaters, and by vermin and reptiles that can kill with one bite.

In an effort to find new reserves and also as a way to cooperate with the Indonesian government, Mobil had committed to do one well in each of the three blocks on Irian Jaya, and geologists had developed 37 leads in both the East and West Lengguru blocks. Another series of leads were being developed for the Babo block to drill in 1993. To drill a well the exploration team had to pick the precise spot and then calculate the cost of the well and the necessary logistical support, and get budget approval from Mobil's management in Jakarta, the BPPKA and Pertamina, and Mobil management in the U.S. The first well was in the West Lengguru at a site called Kamakawalla, where a drill site had been selected atop a steep outcropping a half-hour helicopter ride from the coastal camp at an airstrip called Kaimana. Among the items to be organized and paid for was transportation (air), food, medicine, talent (labor), and then appropriate vendors had to be identified to provide all of this. The infrastructure means the construction of power generation stations, clean and air conditioned housing, fresh water plumbing, toilets and showers, mess halls, medical stations, and technical support areas where computers could be

uplinked to satellites for up-to-date real time well analysis from Dallas to make sure the tool pusher has aimed the drill bit through the right sedimentary structures. The job would involve more than 250 people from four continents.

As all of this was going on, the exploration team visited the Kepala Desi near Kaimana, explained the project and determined whether this political leader had any particular problem, say, with food or medicine, road repairs, folk festivals, rival leaders and the like. It was at this point that you decided what kind of good neighbor program was required. A key element in this was that you must not make permanent commitments to the locals. There is only a one-in-ten chance that any well will discover anything of value. It's nothing personal. It's business. Unlike the Dutch, Japanese or Javanese, when Mobil showed up in this equatorial rain forest in the middle of the South Pacific there would be a 90 percent chance the company would leave and never come back.



It was midnight when Simon and I boarded a Fokker 28 at Halim Jakarta Airport last July with a Canadian named Niles Blackman on the way to Irian Jaya. Blackman, the #2 man for the company in Indonesia, was on his way to check the progress of the wildcat in the West Lengguru block. Simon and I were going to look-see the community and determine how much more we had to do with our good neighbor program.

The trip would take six hours and included a stop at Ujung Pandang in the upper peninsula of Sulawesi for refueling. When the door to the cabin was opened on the airstrip, the lights inside the plane went on and attracted a swarm of bugs that we spent the rest of the flight worrying about. By dawn we had arrived at an airport built by the Japanese during the war at Sorong in Irian Jaya, a town in the South Pacific where fishing and carousing were the main occupations of the locals.

As a cool breeze came over the water, we found seats at a makeshift cafe where young Irians served thick, gritty coffee from glass tumblers. On the walls were foot-wide spider-like crabs mounted for sale. I learned these were called coconut crabs, having crawled from the water to live in the trees. The air was seasoned with the odors of the people who lived in makeshift hovels nearby. They were dressed in other people's discarded clothing, tattered and worn black and smooth by filth. Some appeared eager to work around the dock and taxi boats that carried people from the airport to the town of Sorong and small market nearby; others appeared deranged. It was near here that Michael C. Rockefeller, a great-grandson of Mobil's founder and a son of New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, was lost more than two decades before. The local story was that he had capsized in his canoe and swam for help. When some local Irians found him, he made the wrong gestures or

motions and he was killed and eaten. His remains were never found.

After a three-hour stopover in Sorong, we took a Sky Van for an hour's flight to a town called Fak Fak, where Mobil had built a base camp for the review of geological data from the Babo block. Fak Fak is located on a very rocky slope overlooking a bay of blue-green water. We rode in a Land Rover over incredibly rugged terrain to the makeshift wood buildings constructed on a steep hillside to house the geological crew. One of the guys said that the word fak in the local lingo means rock. The plural for fak is fak fak; thus the town name, in English, would be Rocks.

We visited with the chief geologist, a young Scotsman from Aberdeen wearing a striped crew shirt, cut-off Levis, and hiking boots. His accent was oddly out of place. His technical expertise was stunning. It turned out that only a year before he had been a professor of geology at the University in Aberdeen, had tired of classroom work, and signed up to explore for oil in Irian Jaya (a kind of Scots Indiana Jones). He and his team of explorationists and Irian packers were spending two to three weeks at a time, walking through the remote terrain, machetes and malaria pills at hand, sampling rocks for geological and chemical content. Their efforts were supplemented by original geological maps they had turned up in a Dutch museum, which were made more than a century ago and were still accurate in every detail. The entire project was designed to determine the most promising location for a drill rig to target some potential oil or gas bearing sedimentary zone more than a mile underground.

From this point, we hopped two four-seater helicopters for the final leg to Kaimana. Below were uninhabited islands of jungle and rain forest, where the green treetops were covered here and there by cotton-like fog and clouds. Surrounding the islands were green-yellow stripes of limestone sands at the shorelines. Occasionally we would see a fishing canoe, and once in a while caught people waving at us as we flew overhead. On one island, we touched down at a former Japanese landing strip at a place called Karas, which was used as a staging area for geological teams. We walked over to the water's edge where Irians, employed as stewards and local hands, were living in canvas-covered lean-tos.

By the time we got to Kaimana, 14 hours had passed on the clock since leaving Jakarta. Part of the PSC in West Lengguru called for Mobil to rebuild the Airport at Kaimana, which had been constructed by the Japanese and which the Indonesian government now wanted expanded and upgraded so that it could handle modern passenger jets. Even if Mobil failed to find oil or gas, the government would supply locals with a new airport. Mobil justified this expense as part of an effort to control transportation costs for the wells. Half of the cost of each well was transportation, primarily helicopters, which were incredibly inefficient. An airport to handle jets could enable the compa-

ny to bring in hundreds of workers at a time directly from Jakarta, or from Darwin, Australia, about 800 miles to the south, and eliminate the chopper hops to Sorong and Fak Fak.

We climbed into a jeep and toured the base camp, which was originally built by the Dutch before the World War and upgraded by the Japanese. The remains of war were evident. We saw a live ammo storage mound the Japanese had created 40 years before and which the airport construction crew had inadvertently uncovered when they needed dirt. Along the beach, beneath beautifully arching palm trees, were cement pillbox bunkers Japanese soldiers had built to withstand an invasion. We found one cannon, which the conquering U.S. Marines had placed near the airport. The marking clearly read: Made In Michigan USA. It was aimed at the sea and, though rusted, still intact.

We took a seven-mile unpaved road to the town of Kaimana, where we provided entertainment by walking amid villagers' front yards and inspected a boat carving enterprise and other gathering areas. We found one man who proudly showed off his crocodile farm. His young assistants dressed in T-shirts and shorts relaxed the blades of their machetes on their shoulders. I looked for smiling faces among these young men, but found only suspicion. The town's main street was well-constructed, with wide drainage areas under the sidewalks and trim, freshly painted pink cement buildings on either side. The commercial strip was nearly abandoned in the late afternoon. One of our group wanted to buy beer to give to a construction crew chief completing the painstakingly slow and hot asphalt job on the runway. We were directed to a shopkeeper who had a room filled with cases of the local brew. The shopkeepers were Chinese, whose excited children laughed and blew around our legs like leaves as we bought the cases of beer.

The beer was consumed later that evening in a fog of bug bomb on the porch of a water's edge cottage leased by the crew chief from a local landlord. In a photograph this would be a primitive ideal: soft waves along a South Pacific island shore, with fruit, birds, wildlife, fish in abundance. The reality, however, included a rotting swamp odor and knowledge that eating such produce would likely lead to fevers from parasites, and any bug bites could cause death from a deadly form of malaria that leads to a virulent fever of the brain. In clear view to our left on the edge of the beach, with the waves lapping around its exterior, was a small, rust-encrusted bulldozer that had been discarded by a U.S. Marine more than 40 years ago. This area was claimed by the Dutch in 1670 and by the Japanese in 1930, only to be expelled by the U.S. Marines in 1943. In 1946, the Dutch returned until the Indonesians expelled them nearly two decades later.



Indonesia has more than 360 million acres of rain forest, equal to about 75

percent of land on the islands, acres like the West Lengguru block in Irian Jaya, a remote area loved by others in the abstract. In considering the future of rain forests, consider the seven-mile road from the airstrip to the village. Every few thousand yards, Irians had carved small clearances in the rain forest, cut down and burned the trees and planted small gardens where they grew the fruit and vegetables they needed to supplement their fish diet. After a season or two at each plot, the Irians abandoned the site and moved to the next, and repeated the process. Walking along the road were pregnant mothers and naked, dusty children, many of whom had orange hair, a symptom of a vitamin deficiency.

While returning to the airstrip from the base camp, we passed a truck that was transporting more than a dozen Irians from the town to the asphalt construction site. The men in this work gang were dark and dressed in soiled T-shirts and dark work pants. As they passed the jeep they looked inside and recognized us.

“Boulee boulee,” they shouted, waving and smiling. White men.



The next morning, we waited at the Kaimana base camp because fog at the Kamakawalla drill site prevented a chopper flight for hours. We stayed with Blackman in the radio shed as he listened to the messages from the well logger at the drill site relaying information about the progress of the well. The Kamakawalla well, at 6,000 feet and now 22 percent over budget and costing \$17 million, was “tickling the top of the objective,” with the drill bit aiming at what were called Woniwagi sands that date from the Jurassic age. The geoscientists said this sedimentary zone could contain 500 million barrels of oil. If the well was to be a discovery there now should be indications of hydrocarbon molecules and phosphorescence in the drilling mud that was circulating around the drill hole. Data about that mud was being constantly monitored by the well-log crew on site and simultaneously being analyzed by Mobil geoscientists in the U.S. who could read the well log data being sent simultaneously via satellite to Mobil’s technical center in Dallas.

That morning, July 28, Blackman was not hearing what he wanted to hear. He was seated with his hands gripping the tops of his knees, his teeth were clenched and his cheeks were pulled back in a tight smile. As he listened to the data over the radio, Blackman slowly bent over as if experiencing a cramp, and he wrapped himself in his arms and stared at the floor. He was the responsible party on this and it was at this moment you saw what exploration means. You are at bat, you have gambled \$17 million of the shareholders’ money, you have flown hundreds of men thousands of miles repeatedly over 18 months across the islands of the South Pacific, negotiated deals, gone to countless business planning sessions, listened to and experienced the dreams of dozens

of government ministers, well loggers, drillers, managers, boat carvers, accountants, families, tribal chiefs, and pregnant mothers of orange haired children... You have done everything to find out whether you are going to be successful at this moment and whether West Lengguru might turn into another Arun, a cornerstone of economic opportunity to a people no one much cared about one way or the other.

But the well came up dry. Within a month, the well was plugged and abandoned, the drilling site reforested and the boulee boulee gone.



The PT Arun LNG plant is at the opposite end of Indonesia, on the coast, with beach and surf in the background near sculpted grass on tank berms. The globe-like LNG tanks are clean and shining in the sun. An LNG tanker rests at dockside in the protected harbor.

The employee residential area in Aceh near the PT Arun LNG plant is called Bukit Indah, which is Bahasa Indonesia for Beautiful Hill. The 200 homes arranged in a subdivision are reserved for supervisory and managerial types and are constructed so that you might believe on a quiet night that you were in Southern California or Florida. The other employees at the Arun field or PT Arun LNG plant find housing for their families in nearby towns. Mobil Arun field operations employs 710 from Mobil Oil Indonesia and 270 Indonesian contractor's employees, of whom only 18 are ex-pats. The PT Arun plant employs 1,400 Indonesians and only four ex-pats.

To get to the plant, in Aceh you ride on roads built on dikes between sections of rice paddies. Young children walk and ride bicycles along these roads. Girls wear their heads covered in the traditional Muslim custom. Cows and goats wander freely around the village streets. One day I saw a boy running after a cow that had gotten away from him. The brown animal was running down the road with his lead trailing behind him, just out of the boy's grasp. People along the way stopped and laughed at the boy's chase. Men collect at crudely constructed wooden shacks at street corners to drink tea and gossip. Men and women, wearing cone shaped hats, bend over in the knee deep watered fields tending rice plants. Clear plastic water jugs are suspended from wires across a paddy to bounce in the breeze and other more traditional makeshift scarecrows dot the landscape to help farmers scare off birds.

Near the LNG plant are a cement factory, a fertilizer plant, and other fabrication centers that were built here to take advantage of the energy supplies. These plants employ thousands and sustain the area. But the Arun discovery is more than 20 years old, and the gas (the engine that drives this area) is running out. Mobil will spend \$560 million over two years on the booster compressor project at the Arun field to maintain production levels for the next five years. After that the field will decline at a steady rate until it is exhausted.

Unless new gas is found to feed the plant, the area will grow weeds by the first decade of the next century.



In Jakarta, Mobil is trying to solve Arun's gas supply problem. Where will the new gas come from? Exxon made a discovery of 40 trillion cubic feet of gas near Natuna Island, more than 2,000 pipeline miles away in the sea between Malaysia and Borneo. Pertamina is considering forcing Exxon to accept Mobil as a partner in the Natuna project and pipeline the gas to the Arun plant in Aceh. It would cost \$20 billion.

Another possibility is a recent gas discovery near the Arun field that is available now under circumstances so circuitous and painful that few in the company are able to think of the issue clearly. Mobil's reputation as shrewd negotiators and oil explorationists has been called into question by the situation in Block A in Sumatra, which is owned by a company called Asamera, and is located south of Block B, owned by Mobil, where the Arun field is located.

Last year, Asamera was getting ready to drill a prospect in Block A they called the Kuala Langsa. Asamera offered Mobil a 50 percent interest in whatever was discovered for \$110 million. The well would test a prospective gas zone similar in size and scope to the Arun field discovered by Mobil 20 years ago just to the north. Offering a hunk of the reward in exchange for a hunk of the risk is a common practice in industry, called a "farm-out" if you are selling or a "farm-in" if you buying.

Mobil's confidence was dicey. Mobil experts said there was only a 6 percent chance Kuala Langsa would be successful. Mobil told Asamera no, but if somebody else expresses an interest give us a call and maybe we'll match it. When the Japan National Petroleum Company offered \$70 million for the 50 percent interest, Asamera didn't bother to find out whether Mobil would say no again. This was an insult, but there is bad blood here. Asamera long ago gave up its interest in Block B, on which Mobil later found Arun.

In March, however, the industry started buzzing that "elephant found" buzz. The rumors in the halls of Pertamina in Jakarta were intense and heated. Our ears heard stories about "company maker," "the new Arun" had been found. Asamera, being conservative and tight about the information, was saying little. But international corporate and financial issues were over-taking matters.

Asamera is owned by Gulf Canada, which has its headquarters in Calgary, Alberta, across the street from Mobil Oil Canada. Gulf Canada and Mobil Oil Canada are partners in Hibernia, a huge oil development project in the North Atlantic. Problems associated with that project are legendary; the most tragic was the sinking of the Ocean Ranger drill ship in 1980 and the death of more than 75, a devastating loss to the maritime communities of Newfoundland and

Nova Scotia. A more technical challenge would be the icebergs, which travel in that offshore region and would threaten to topple any offshore production structure that might be built.

Gulf Canada owns 25 percent of the Hibernia project offshore Newfoundland. Mobil has a 28 percent interest, Chevron 25 percent, and 22 percent is held by Petro-Canada, which is partly owned by the government of Canada, which itself offered up to \$1 billion in tax incentives and underwriting to get the project off the ground.

The Hibernia project began after the 1979 discovery of about 500 million barrels of oil in the outer continental shelf in the middle of the North Atlantic's iceberg alley. After more than a decade of disputes between the companies, the federal government in Ottawa and the provincial government in St. John's, a deal was finally cut in 1990 whereby the companies and Canada would guarantee spending \$1 billion to build a concrete platform capable of withstanding the impact of an iceberg, while at the same time capable of producing more than 110,000 barrels a day for 18 years. If after the initial investment the partners decided to go ahead and finish, the total cost of the project would be about \$5.5 billion. Along the way about 13,000 would be employed during construction between 1990 and 1996 and another 1,000 full time thereafter. It is among the largest construction projects on earth and would be the single biggest economic project in eastern Canada in history.

The maritime province of Newfoundland (whose inhabitants are labeled "micks & macks" owing to their Scot and Irish origins and more locally called "Newfies") are a wayward and much put upon Canadian people. The swells of Quebec and Ontario always have a Newfie joke handy.

Hibernia's recent problems were created because Gulf Canada was purchased in the late 1980s by the Reichmann brothers of Toronto, who also own Olympia & York, the world's largest private real estate empire, and who are arguably the richest family in Canada. The Reichmanns threw the Hibernia project into doubt in March when they notified the Hibernia partners that Gulf Canada was for sale, thus pulling one of the four partners out of the deal, and threatening to mothball the entire Hibernia project. This caused the Newfies to freeze like deer caught in the headlights. Prime Minister Brian Mulrooney, whose Tory Government had sunk \$1 billion into Hibernia, and who faced election in a year, and Mobil, which had spent \$250 million, and the other partners were little better.

The underlying problem was that the Reichmanns are nearly \$20 billion in debt worldwide. By comparison, the debt of Donald Trump, the big mouth with a show-biz complex, was small potatoes at \$3 billion. The collapse of real estate prices worldwide, and the recession that padlocked the commercial office space business, caused the Reichmann empire to crash. In March, when the Reichmanns told the Hibernia partners that Gulf Canada was for sale, the

Reichmanns were saying in effect they were willing to write off Gulf's \$250 million share gambling table change.

The Canadian federal government, Newfoundland, Mobil, Chevron and Petro-Canada were dumbstruck. What to do? Who will buy Gulf's share? Negotiations about who will give what, and how much and for how long, have dominated secure line phones for weeks. The jury is still out.

Among the Reichmanns' key assets are office complexes in Toronto, New York, Tokyo and London. While in London I saw from my hotel window the Reichmanns' Canary Wharf office complex, the tallest building and most risky and ambitious commercial office project in London. It was constructed on a 71-acre site in the once derelict Docklands district. It was built because the Reichmanns cut a tax deal with the Thatcher government, which was crazy for development and gave incentives to the Canadians willing to take the risk. The gamble didn't work. Olympia & York's worldwide empire was \$18.5 billion in debt, and its largest asset, the \$7 billion Canary Wharf office complex in London's East End, had lots of vacancy signs.

In May, the largest real estate empire in modern world collapsed. Time ran out on the Reichmanns. After two months of negotiations with creditors failed and bondholders threatened to seize O&Y's Toronto real estate, Olympia and 29 of its companies (including Gulf Canada and Asamera) filed for protection under bankruptcy laws.

All this was being worked on in Jakarta as a potential factor for the Arun plant. Now that the Reichmanns had thrown their assets into play, what would the Asamera discovery in Block A be worth today? Asamera was tight-lipped, but the Gulf Canada press agents in Calgary were worked overtime to make the shares of their company more attractive. *The Wall Street Journal* said that the Asamera natural gas discovery found 700 feet of pay zone, which made it equal to the 15 trillion cubic feet in the Arun field. Our experts say the field is 20 percent of that.

Will Mobil pay Gulf Canada for Asamera for the discovery? If so, how much? \$200 million? More? Will Mobil take it in exchange for assuming Gulf Canada's Hibernia share offshore Newfoundland? Will Mobil do nothing and let the Reichmanns swing in bankruptcy and other litigation for years while Mobil takes over Hibernia and then grabs the Asamera acreage through Pertamina's influence and interjection anyway? Such are the oil business games when nine of 10 wells are dry.



My companion my final day in Jakarta was Mohammed, a devout Muslim from Medan who quit medical school in his final year to become a journalist. An idealist, Mohammed is about 50 and sees the world through the eyes of a social scientist. He prays five times a day to Mecca, and last year spent more

than a month on hajj, the holy pilgrimage to Mecca. As an Indonesian, he is devout in the way a Presbyterian minister from Upstate New York adheres to the tenants of his faith. He is a gentle man, with a kind heart and possessed of a mystic's sense of quest about the riddles of life.

Mohammed loves to talk politics and tell me about how Indonesia became independent and aspects of the national character. The building outside Mobil's office at Radu Plaza is named after General Sudirman, a post World War II Indonesian general who refused to surrender and fled to the bush rather than give up to the Dutch in the 1945-50 war. When Sudirman finally came in after a truce with the Dutch, he publicly scolded Sukarno for giving up. This act of defiance earned Sudirman an icon's perch in the eyes of Indonesian nationalists, and a smile now across Mohammed's lips.

"He had no formal military training," Mohammed was saying, "the Dutch never had him in the academies. All he knew was that he should not give up."

He also told me that the Indonesian sense of independence takes in the British as well. Mohammed told of an incident in 1945, where a British general was killed and the Brits demanded that the killers be turned over or else they would level Surabaya. The people rioted and fought the British, and many were killed. The day Indonesians rose against the British blackmail is a national holiday. But despite these stories, Mohammed and Indonesians display remarkably little animosity toward Dutch people. Why is that, I asked?

"Fate," Mohammed explained. "It was their fate that they should be here. It was our fate that we were here to fight against them. Many died. That was there fate. What we did to each other is fate. Once it is over, we go on."

Simon wanted me to visit a PR agency that he was considering hiring. The agency was run by Cometa M. Roosseno, whose firm was called Citra Relata Mulia. Simon wanted to let Citra (which means image) design and publish the employee newsletter. Cometa had just moved into the 3rd floor of the Gedung Majalah Tempo building in the Kuningan section of Jakarta. Tempo is Indonesia's Time magazine and the building was its HQ. This was a new office for her and was not in proper repair.

We talked business. Cometa knew several Mobil execs and had worked effectively over the years as a VIP hospitality organizer, once orchestrating the publicity for a book published by Mobil in Indonesia, and once staging a day-long conference sponsored by Mobil on the importance of preserving Javanese temples not only as monuments of ancient culture but also as assets in attracting tourists and developing local economies. The Javanese aristocrats who remain in the positions of power loved it.

Cometa is the widow of a prominent government official, a Batak named Mulia. Her father, Roosseno, was a prominent Javanese aristocrat who held a number of ministerial posts. She is well educated, uptown and has two chil-

dren living in Sacramento. Her chief copywriter is an American who lives in Jakarta because he has a girlfriend he won't leave.

Along the roadway leaving to and from her office were shanties constructed where several people presided over little shops to repair tires, sell soft drinks or cigarettes or otherwise do what anyone in the area might need done. Our driver got lost at one point and we stopped beside one such shanty. No larger than a pup tent, it was made of cardboard, metal fragments from car doors and plastic sheets. A broad-faced, dark skinned woman of about 50 was seated in front, tending some laundry while a man of similar features repaired a bicycle tire. While the driver got directions, Mohammed pointed to the people across the way.

"These are Simon's people," meaning Batak from North Sumatra. "They are very tough and live all through here."

That was the second or third time that Mohammed, from South Sumatra, had mentioned Batak and Simon's people. I asked the significance of Batak on the street.

"Oh, they work so hard. They come here and put up with so much hardship, living in such small quarters and working at any hard job do no one else will do. I think these people will have a son, who perhaps will drive a truck or bus, and then a grandson who will go to university."

I thought of Cometa and her being a Javanese aristocrat's daughter. Was it a problem for a Javanese aristocrat's daughter to marry a Batak, I asked.

"Oh, no," Mohammed explained. "He was an intellectual. That made it acceptable. Education is the difference."



Suharto at 70 is the last of the World War II-era patriots whose experience was the revolutionary overthrow of Dutch colonial rule. He took over in a coup in 1965 when Sukarno was forced to step down after it became clear to Indonesian elders that Sukarno's government was becoming dangerously red. Soeharto rules an Indonesia that is a kaleidoscope of culture, ethnic diversity, religions, folkways, social traditions. This is a most confusing stew, much more subtle and rich than can be imagined by any visiting boulee.

There is no one Indonesia. It is the United Islands & Provinces of Indonesia, which of course is too big a mouthful, but describes it better. How can the world understand one place that includes Bali, Java, Sumatra, and Irian Jaya and that has Aceh, North Sumatra, Central Java, West Java, Sulawesi, who all make believe they are one people?

One way this is done is through Suharto's two universal edicts: 1) every Indonesian child must go to school and learn the one national language, Bahasa Indonesia, and 2) philosophy of Pancasila.

Bahasa Indonesia, a Malay tongue, binds the multi-ethnic groups together

and is favored over local dialects. Pancasila is a bit more enigmatic. The word embodies fundamental principles that Indonesians all must believe in: there is One Supreme God and many ways to know him; Indonesians must work for a just and civilized society, nationalism, democracy, and social justice.

The elements of Pancasila are drilled into each Indonesian child in all classrooms and state pronouncements. In effect Pancasila has become a religion in itself. There is to be no deviation from Pancasila as Indonesia's state philosophy. It is conveniently broad so everyone can believe in it and retain their unique ethnic identity, as long as no one tries to define who the One Supreme God is or take democracy to extremes.

Also, of course, Indonesians are the most human of people. Everything is taken with a grain of salt. Most Indonesians are Muslim the way most Americans are Christian. In fact, Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world. But 10 percent are Christian, including most Batak, who were converted by the Dutch into a kind of Lutheran/Dutch Reformed style of Christianity. Some hardy missionaries translated the Bible into the Batak native language, energizing their evangelization program.

I mentioned to Simon I was awakened from a slumber at sun down and again about 4 a.m. by the Muslim chanter at a nearby mosque singing out a call to prayer. This singing had gone on for nearly a half an hour each time.

Simon joked, looking over his shoulders and saying: "I do not understand these things." He then started to laugh. "You know we have a saying here—can't these people hear, are they deaf?" Simon rolled his eyes and broke out in unabashed laughter.

So much for fears about Muslim domination in such a culture. Of course, Pancasila is a philosophy. Practices vary. Not everybody is equal before the law. For example, in Indonesia, all major industries are supervised by state ministries, which hold all licenses and award or otherwise supervise all contracts. Some industries are operated directly as creatures of the state. The oil and gas industry, for example, is a government monopoly, administered by the Ministry of Petroleum which oversees the state oil company, Pertamina, which in turn has PSCs or joint operating agreements (JORs) with companies like Mobil. Mobil, in effect, is a government subcontractor, and every employee of its subsidiary, Mobil Oil Indonesia, is part of the government's civil service; in effect government employees.

Suharto has a half-brother and cousin, and seven kids, three of whom are active in the business. The two sons and daughter together have formed business groups which together employ 26,400 people, have 263 companies employing 26,400 people in nearly every sector of the economy, particularly commodity industries such as wood, oil and gas, farm produce, as well as construction, manufacturing, refining and petrochemicals. Suharto's daughter, for example, is head of the company building an elevated railroad line through

Jakarta's inner city. His son owns the company that built and operates a most magnificent Grand Hyatt on a favored Jakarta street corner. Some government agencies suggest that those who wish to do business with the government should have all their visitors stay in this new hotel. Also it is wise that McDonald's purchase cattle from the Suhartos' ranch for hamburgers.

As a way to get a contract it is sometimes wise to be affiliated with one of Suharto's kin as a partner or investor. In this way, you gain insulation from arbitrary and unexplained delays within the bureaucracy. The family revenues total more than \$24 billion a year. This is an open scandal. There is quiet criticism, and cynics abound. Every new business venture in Indonesia is suspected as a Suharto front. Simon said Suharto's family is richer than the Marcoses.

This little family enterprise is protected by a closed political system. The principle of democracy is a key to Pancasila; there was a presidential election scheduled for June 3, which is preceded by an official campaign period that began May 10.

Yet the Jakarta regime banned any political meetings of more than 50 people prior to the June 3 vote. The vote was easy to predict. For example, all civil service employees of every company are further organized into civil service associations, which report to BPPKA separately from company management. The association's leaders are selected by BPPKA and the government ministries which supervise the companies. The leaders of these associations are chosen by the bureaucrats and government ministers. The number two man in the civil service association at Mobil is Simon.

A characteristic of Javanese is that direct confrontation is poor form. Javanese hate a direct question. It may force an answer that would be somehow offensive to the listener. To put a Javanese in such a position embarrasses him, and is very impolite. It is also difficult to ask a Javanese to do something directly. He may not want to and would be bound by tradition and manners not to tell you so directly. Dealing with Javanese, therefore, is very sensitive and relies on subtlety and considerable knowledge about the nuances of culture.

None of these inhibitions are true for Batak. The Batak's ethnic identity allows direct, forceful and assertive action. The wider Indonesian community tolerates far greater Batak influence than their mere numbers would warrant, simply because modern organizations all require the kind of temperaments that Batak embody. Batak comprise only about 10 percent of the population and are predominantly Christian. However, this Batak/Christian minority is highly valued in this Javanese/Muslim culture. Batak hold well over 30 percent of the senior posts in the military and key decision-making posts in the bureaucracy.

For the upcoming political campaign, Suharto and the government ruling party have called on all civil servants to organize the vote for the government

party called Golkar. Therefore, part of Simon's job is to make sure the Mobil employees are canvassed and encouraged to vote for Suharto's party.

"You mean you report to the government on this," I asked.

"Oh, yes, certainly. The government believes that civil servants should work to get the government reelected. My goal is to get 95 percent votes in favor of the government."

Simon explained that this might include letting employees think that he or others will look at the ballot and that names might be marked down. This is the act of a very aggressive, assertive and overt personality that is uniquely suited to a Batak. Javanese could never be so direct. Batak are not afraid of direct, independent action and are prepared to accept the community's contempt. The Batak are useful to the Javanese. Simon understands the nature of this relationship and accepts it as his fate.

"I cannot get away from this square face," Simon told me. "They know who I am."