

People – Interviews & Profiles



As Jakartass I have been interviewed three times:

BBC Radio: <http://www.archive.org/details/FloodingInJakartaFebruary2007>

Jakarta Globe: <http://thejakartaglobe.com/city/my-jakarta-terry-collins/314217>

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Time Out Jakarta ...

April 2010

I was asked by Anand Mathai, managing editor of Time Out Jakarta (*since folded*), if I would be happy to be interviewed by the magazine for "an article on Jakarta's top bloggers and twitterers (the 'digerati' if you like)".

I agreed and answered several questions by email. However, he later wrote that the interview had to be cut from the magazine at the last minute for reasons beyond [his] control "but please believe me when I say that it was not my choice - we had to cut some other important content as well."

Nice to think that my musings constitute "important content".

Judge for yourselves.



1. If you were forced to write up a 'mission statement' for Jakartass, what would it be?

Good questionerm my original impetus for Jakartass was that I saw it as a way of keeping in touch with the friends and family I rarely meet face-to-face. I also needed a creative outlet, but had no other expectations. 'Diaries' are generally private and of the moment, but now that Jakartass has a worldwide readership, I make an effort to write balanced posts which are suitably crafted.

The one problem I have is that I have never known what appeals most. I find it somewhat strange that the posts which attract the most interesting comments are those I've written almost on the spur of the moment.

2. Do you try to update according to a certain schedule or just when you have something on your mind?

Unfortunately, as a freelance language consultant awaiting final settlement of a legal case won on appeal to the Supreme Court a year ago, I have to scabble for paying work, so I currently have a lot less time for Jakartass.

However, I rarely have writer's block as there's always something which makes me blink or ask "what the ...?". I'm often perplexed by the lack of foresight, by the short-termism, and by the contradictions which pervade Indonesian society.

For example, there is the recent news of ulemas backing the pornography law whilst condoning men marrying underage girls, or the Jakarta Governor (Fauzi Bowo) telling us what a wonderful job he's doing preventing floods in a rainy season with less than usual rainfall whilst allowing the development of a 23 kilometre stretch of Jakarta Bay.

3. Which blog post (or posts) that you've written over the years are you most proud of? Which was the most controversial?

I've published 1,600 posts in just over six years and I'm pleased with quite a few of them.

For example, in late 2005, I criticised Adam Suherman for allowing a full-page ad in the Jakarta Post without having it proofread. I closed my post by saying ""if Adam Air couldn't give a sh*t about a simple thing like {proofreading}, then what are the odds that they cut corners on aircraft maintenance?"

How many planes did Adam Air subsequently lose?

One I'm proud of, one that took some time to prepare, is my faux wiki page *Japong* about Jakarta (underwater) in the year 2107. But maybe my best writing was in my three-part romantic vignettes about a *Girl On A Bus*

4. Any particular reasoning behind the name 'Jakartass'? I couldn't find any mention of your actual name on the blog (perhaps I didn't look carefully enough...). Do you write any differently as 'Jakartass' than in your other writings?

An 'ass' in British English is someone who plays the fool, the court jester who punctures the pomposity of rulers, yet is trusted. The main reason for my pen name is so that I can adopt a different 'voice' and make public those comments I'd otherwise say sotto voce to trusted friends.

As for my 'real' name, it's there. Sometimes it's embedded in a post, but it's always there in the ad for my rewrite of Culture Shock! Jakarta (pub. Marshall Cavendish).. The original author, Derek Bacon, left Indonesia back in '97 with his Indonesian wife and has since forged a successful career as a graphic artist. He is often commissioned to provide the cover of The Economist (cf. April 11-16 issue). I also take on editing commissions when it's important to retain the 'voice' of the original author.

5. What do you think of the Indonesian blogosphere and internet users in general? Do you think there's something unique about the Indonesian character that makes them more willing to embrace new social media like blogs, Facebook and twitter?

Firstly, I would put blogs in a different category from online social networks. The blogosphere I belong to offers considered opinions about Indonesian matters with a commenting facility.

You can only write epigrams on cellphones and I'm not interested in snippets of

ephemeral information describing passing fads or the minutiae of other people's lives; I'm too busy living my own.

There is also a danger in that tweets are rarely considered and are therefore emotional outbursts. Mob rule could result from such sparks.

That Indonesians have adopted the social media in such great numbers is, I feel, a sad indictment of the education system with its emphasis on results rather than creativity. The 'educated' middle classes are so intent on consuming the new that they don't give themselves the time to properly absorb it, let alone reflect upon it.

The political classes have been directly elected, but in no way do they represent the people who elected them or meet their aspirations. So maybe these media are also used as a statement of, or search for, identity, self representation as it were.

Articles, essays, stories and so on are there for prosperity so it's important to follow a process which takes time. If I write about issues which need airing because the national media hasn't, or won't, then I do a lot of research and checking before publishing. Occasionally I publish articles written by others which I feel are of public concern, such as the pending environmental disaster in Balikpapan Bay

I remain an optimist and look forward to a greater expression of what's important in the long-term.

6. What's the first blog you go to when you want to read others reactions to local news and events?

I have a separate page of links, including expat bloggers here, Indonesian expats abroad and Indonesians, all of whom write in English. Some of us are serious, some cynical, some both (moi?) but all are equally valid in that we observe and comment on the societal changes Indonesia is undergoing.

If I had to pick one, it would be Indonesian Anonymus (now defunct) because although they post much too infrequently, whoever they are, they are obviously caring, sensitive and sensible folk.

7. You are sometimes described as being the most popular expat blogger in Jakarta.

That's nice, but I can't say why because I write what I want to write at a particular time. I don't pander to, say, fashion cliques, and have never published gossip. Being somewhat serious yet popular seems to be a contradiction in terms nowadays.

8. After living here for 20 years and marrying a local, do you still feel like a part of the expat community? And what do you think of the expat community in Jakarta? Do you think it's changed a lot since you first arrived?

Actually, I can't say that I've ever felt part of "the expat community" if by that you mean business executives who get paid generous salaries, housing in exclusive enclaves, paid schooling for their children and other 'hardship allowances'.

My expat friends are those who, like me, have made a life here, generally with Indonesian life partners. But, that said, yes it has changed in some ways. The Asian Economic Meltdown (*krismon*) in '97 forced many expatriates out, as did the "Indonesianisation" of jobs previously done by expats.

It should also be noted that the vast majority of expats are Asians, such as Koreans and, increasingly, Chinese, who are here to take advantage of the pool of cheap labour for their export-orientated manufacturing plants.

9. What's your favourite place to go with your family in Jakarta?

On a fairly regular basis, it has to be the Ya 'Udah Bistro in Central Jakarta: it's a good place to meet friends, with good food at a reasonable price, though not much for vegetarians. But that's just me. Pity about the *bajajs* passing by and drowning out much of our conversations!.

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The 'Fig'

I have yet to interview a politician or business mogul, but I have lambasted a few in my writing. The photo of President Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo and his Vice President Jusuf Kalla is, therefore, gratuitous. The image was taken on the campaign trail in 2014, and their two-fingered salutes were a reference to the number on the ballot papers. I do wonder, however if they knew that to Brits the gesture is equivalent to the middle-finger in most of the world and the Indonesian 'half-thumb' ('fig').



In my writing I have offered the fig to three prominent public figures who have earned public scorn for their arrogance.

Note: The links in my original posts may be dead, and factual information may now be incorrect. Nut, no matter, what I wrote was of their time.

Aburizal Bakrie - Exclusive Interview (October 2010)

Your correspondent found lantern-jawed Aburizal Bakrie in a relaxed and jovial mood following the recent successful Golkar Convention which confirmed him as its Chairman For Life. We met in his throne room at Wisma Bakrie, his corporate H.Q. in Central Jakarta.



A number of conditions were agreed before our meeting: namely that there would be no mention of his business dealings in agriculture, real estate, trade, shipping, banking, insurance, media, manufacturing, construction, and mining.

Nor should we touch on political issues such as the ousting of Saint Sri Mulyana as Minister of Finance because she initiated charges of tax evasion against a number of his companies.

.....

J. Firstly, Your Excrescence, thank you for seeing me at such short notice.

AB. My pleasure, J.. Did you have any problems getting here?

J. None at all, Your Excrescence, thank you; it was really delightful looking down at the huddled masses in the gridlock below us.

(Note: AB. had put one of his fleet of helicopters at my disposal for my J.ourney into town.)

AB. By the way, let's keep this informal; call me AB..

J. Thank you, Your AB.. Is this in any way related to your amazing physique?

AB. How nice of you to notice, and yes, it relates back to my student days at Bandung Institute of Technology where, in '73, I graduated with my Masters in Social Engineering.

J. Sorry to interrupt you, Your... AB., but my research indicates that you graduated with either a degree in electrical or electronic engineering...

AB. No, not true. I was the Social Secretary on the Student Council, which is where my love of political intrigue first surfaced. I was captain of the badminton team; my nickname arose from the locker room gossip. I was also called Dong for a while

J. Are you suggesting that you were a ladies man, Ab?

AB. Well, of course, it was only natural. With my family pedigree, my charm and good looks, how could I fail?

J. Indeed, and I see that you haven't. You now have three children with your wife Tatty, Anindya, Anindhita and Anindra. Do you ever get confused remembering which is which?

AB. No, of course not. My wife had the Tatty idea of calling them Anind 1, 2 and 3.

J. You must be very proud of them.

AB. Of course, and especially Anind 3 who's proving to be a chip off the old block, as you Brits say (*laughing*).

J. In what way?

AB. Well, as you know, like me he's followed his father into our family business.

(Anindra is an MBA graduate from Bentley University, and currently holds the

position of Vice President Director on the board of tvOne, a company in which his father is the maJ.or shareholder.)

J. *And he's also a ladies man ?*

AB. Indeed. The problem for me as father is that the media seems to have had it in for him. I'm glad that he's now settled down with young Nia, and with SBY's blessing. Mind you, I do wish she hadn't changed her name. I mean, can you pronounce Ramadhania Ardiansyah? As she's also taken my honourAB.le family name, at Tatty's suggestion, we've decided to call her Anind 4.

The one thing no-one can dispute is that Anind 3 has very good eyesight, eh? I mean, there was that Australian tramp Michelle Leslie who suggested that Anind 3 was involved with illegal drugs. No way hosay ... mind you ... if they were legal ...

Then there was the story linking him with Manohara Odelia Pinot. All he did was to give her a lift in his plane and suddenly they were AB.out to get married. No, he wasn't serious, and can you imagine her mother as a sister-in-law? Still, in his role as TV mogul, he did help get her *sinetron* on air.

J. *No thanks, I've already got a few, and they're enough. Anyway, can I just ask you a couple of more questions? I know how busy you are.*

AB. Sure, I'm enjoying our chat.

J. *Firstly, did you just suggest that drugs should be legalised?*

AB. I'm in two minds about this. When I was Minister of Welfare (*in SBY's first Cabinet*) I spent a lot of time visiting prisons. They cost a lot to run and if drugs were legal then we could free up cell space for pornographers and other dangerous offenders.

I was talking to my friend George Soros the other day and he was telling me why he's donated \$1 million to California's Proposition 19 initiative to legalise marijuana. He's looking at it as a business opportunity, and so am I. With Indonesia's massive unemployment, why not legalise it. It would certainly be a growth industry ... if you'll excuse my pun ... and there would be pot loads of money to be made (*laughter*).

J. *A final question if I may. Your daughter Adinda .. Anind 2? ... is rumoured to be involved in a new chain of beauty salons. Is there any truth in this?*

AB. Well, it's still under wraps, but yes it's substantially true. You know AB.out the mudflow caused by the Yogya earthquake ... yeah, I'm getting fed up with the lies of geologists ... but we're interested in a win-win situation.

We're planning a worldwide chain of Sidoarjo Spas which would offer mud baths, along with the usual manicures, pedicures and so on. The so-called 'refugees' in the area will be shareholders. This is why we've only paid them 20% of the compensation; the rest will be invested in shares which we anticipate will yield a healthy 2% per annum yield and Whoa there. I thought we agreed that you wouldn't ask me about my business affairs. That's it, enough is enough.

You can bloody walk home!

(So I did.)

Tifatul Sembiring - the Jakartass Interview (October 2010)

Following the success of my Interview with AB, I was asked to arrange an 'interview' with the then Minister of Communication and Information in SBY's Second Cabinet. Noted for his many inane tweets, Tifatul Sembiring was an easy 'target', and I'd already taken to call him the Twittering Simplefool. Anxious to understand just what makes him tick, your correspondent was fortunate to be granted an interview with him at Soekarno-Hatta airport following his meeting with Barack and Michelle Obama earlier that week.



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J. As-Salāmu `Alayka , Your Holiness. Thank you for agreeing to meet me at such short notice

TS. Wa Alaykum-us-Salam Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakaatuh.

(Note: my pronunciation may not be perfect, but TS seemed perfectly happy to greet this infidel with the traditional two-handed 'handshake'.)

I think we have time; my flight is delayed thanks to the hellfire and brimstone from Gunung Merapi. Allah is still grumbling about our sins.

J. Are you going home for the weekend?

TS. Yes, I haven't seen my family for a couple of weeks and I really miss them.

(Note: TS is married to Sri Rahayu and has seven children, Sabriana, Fathan, Ibrahim, Yusuf, Fatimah, Muhammad and Abdurrahman Sembiring.)

J. I understand that your mother is a Minangkabau (West Sumatra) whilst you take your father's lineage, a Batak Karo. As my wife is also a Batak, from Tapanuli Selatan, I'm interested to know how your family managed to reconcile the two very different cultures - Batak society is patrilineal and Minang society is matrilineal, at least in terms of property ownership.

TS. I'm happy that you've studied Indonesian culture, J, but you surely know that both ethnic groups have now adopted Islam

J. Sorry to interrupt you, but Karo Bataks are religiously pluralistic, practicing Christianity, Islam, and animism ...

TS. That's true, but my clan, Sembiring, adopted Islam. As you undoubtedly know, the Sembirings are *Merga si Lima*, one of the five Karo clans, with cross-cousin marriages as the stated ideal so as we can perpetuate the wife giver (*kalimbubu*) and wife receiver (*anakberu*) relationships among clans. It is also a tradition among us that if we marry someone of a different religion, then the wife's extended family adopts the husband's religion. This has been the tradition for generations.

J. Your wife is from Java

TS. That is also true, and I was born in Bukittinggi (on 28 September 1961). I wanted a better future for my family and looked further afield. My mother is my greatest hero; she is still alive, Allah be praised, and I looked for someone who would nurture our children as my mother has always nurtured me. And Ibu Sri and I have known each other since university. She is the best wife a man could have.

J. That's nice to hear, but if it's not too personal a question, why have you got seven children? When you started your family, Suharto's New Order regime with its slogan *Dua Anak Cukup* (Two children are enough) was saying that the country needed to curb its population growth if it was to meet development goals.

TS. Good question like the Pope, I believe in traditional families and the rights of the unborn child. Again, like him I consider homosexual acts to be intrinsically disordered. Men should be men and fathering children and supporting them is only natural and has been since time immemorial.

Besides, Soeharto was not a good Muslim, so you could say that having a large family was an act of rebellion ... (*laughter*) Seriously, though, we males are in danger of extinction ...

J. Eh, sorry ...?

TS. Oh, haven't you seen the documentary called *The Disappearing Male*? It's all about the chemicals in our food, such as Indomie, which cause all kinds of brain imbalances in boys which can lead to homosexuality and HIV/AIDS.

J. Erm

TS. Yes, it's true ... here, I've got the video on my i-Pad. (*He starts to rummage through his luggage...*)

J. That's OK, Minister, I'll try and log on to the internet later. But that might be a problem, and that leads to my next question.

Although you recently tried to ban access to pornographic sites, an impossible task as you now know, you must be aware that there are very few citizens in Indonesia with access to broadband internet, largely due to the penetration of mobile phones which yield greater profits to telecommunications companies for a much lower capital investment. And who in their right minds would be turned on by a tiny pic or grainy video on a handphone?

TS. Oh, come on, J, surely you know that if you ban something then everyone and their dog is going to try and get it. I'm all in favour of freedom of speech and thought; not only is it in line with the 1945 Constitution but it is also part of my job description as Minister of Communication. It's also why I tweet so much. Just look how much media coverage they have generated and Indonesians are now learning how to express themselves. In this age of *reformasi* that can only be a good thing!

J. But so many have criticised you.

TS. I don't mind that. The criticism of public figures is a necessary evil in a democracy, but I do wish some of my critics would be more polite. Why, some of them call me a goat!

J. I wouldn't worry about that, Minister. I've been called worse.

TS. Really? Such as ..? Hey, do tweet me @tifsembiring.

J. I'd like to ask you about some of your more controversial tweets if I may. Firstly, your statement, first made last year and now repeated this past month in the wake of the Merapi eruption and Mentawai tsunami, that unfaithful nations will be cursed.

TS. Ah, that was taken out of context.

J. Perhaps that's because you can only tweet 140 characters. Perhaps you should keep a blog like several noted commentators such as Desi Anwar, Wimar Witoelar, Julia Suryakusuma and I do. Anyway, perhaps you could expand your statements

for me now.

TS. Certainly, and thanks for the opportunity. What I am trying to draw attention to is global faithlessness and greed. Disasters occur in almost every part of the world; Europe, Asia and the America's have all suffered recent volcanic eruptions often with catastrophic results – I'm sure you don't need examples you can just google it. The natural and unnatural disasters et al is a result of the earth's ongoing evolution, albeit in some cases helped by mankind's greed and ignorance.

J. As I've already written, I can but agree with that.

TS. In specific cases the majority of the victims are Muslim; perhaps we should consider that and what Allah is trying to tell us. Perhaps he wants to assert fundamental beliefs or perhaps Allah wants Islam to progress and modernise and move towards harmony? If we believe the Mayans, perhaps this is the beginning of the end of days.... 2012 is not so far away now. Whenever, this should be a time for reflection and peace.

J. Did you expect such outrage when you tweeted a quote from Adolf Hitler? I wasn't happy either because my father and his generation fought against him and as a kid my playgrounds in London were bomb sites.

TS. I respect that, but I was quoting from *Mein Kampf* which has been translated into Indonesian and can be bought freely here.

J. But the quote you sent - "*The union between two children, when both of them complete each other, this is magic*" - seems to allude to underage sex and could possibly encourage paedophiles

TS. Actually, I have no idea what Hitler meant, but it is rather poetic, isn't it?

J. When you joined SBY's government you resigned your chairmanship of the Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* - PKS), but you obviously continue to be a major influence over the cadres who control local legislatures. How do you view such controversial decisions as the banning of St. Valentine's Day and New Year celebrations in Bukittinggi, and that karaoke bars were shut in Depok?

TS. Well, in Bukittinggi there were shameful scenes of public depravity, such as couples smooching and cuddling. In banning such public affection we ensured that such excitable behaviour would only be conducted in private. I'm pleased to note the high birth rate among teenagers around September and October.

As for the closure of the karaoke bars, we have received numerous tweets thanking us from local residents who had heard enough badly sung renditions of *Cara Saya* (My Way).

J. Yeah, me too. Karaoke should be restricted to bathrooms which have better acoustics.

(laughter)

I think that's your flight being announced, so there's one final question I must ask. I'm referring, of course to what is possibly the most famous handshake ever (with Michelle Obama).

TS. Ah, *Michelle ma belle, sont les mots qui vent tres bien ensemble*. I love the Beatles and all I can say is don't do as I do, but do as I tweet.

With that, TS was escorted through a back door and on to his flight.

Morally Corrupt Barstewards

If I could, I'd place such as the Bakrie Brothers, Eka Tjipta Widjaja, oligarch-owner of Sinar Mas and all those politicians and religious nutters whose 'belief systems' include corruption, exploitation and violence in the stocks.

The medieval purpose of the stocks was to expose offenders to ridicule and mockery; passers-by were encouraged to throw mud, rotten eggs, mouldy fruit and vegetables, smelly fish, offal, and excrement (both animal and human) at those being punished.

However, I can't, but I can pillory them, now used as a verb but with the same intent as the original physical punishment: to publicly humiliate miscreants.



The pillory at Charing cross, London, c. 1808

Indonesia isn't alone in its collection of scoundrels, but as someone with a family to support here, a background in education and a strong commitment to supporting all who endeavour to rise above the non-creative binds imposed by arrogant autocrats.

One such is Putera Sampoerna whose astonishing wealth is largely derived from palm oil, tobacco and online gambling, three industries which have caused untold damage to the environment, health and personal wealth.

In March 2012, I was aghast to read an interview with him in the Jakarta Post, no longer online, about his "social opus, the Putra Sampoerna Foundation".

The article I wrote attracted a lot of attention in an Indonesian forum, gaining a lot more views than all but a couple of my Jakartass Posts. I then dug a little deeper in my researches and ended up with some 4000 words of condemnation, with audio and video links, which I published in four parts. All are now what you can read here.

Putera Sampoerna - Slave Trader? (July 2013)

First a bit of background.

According to the interview, he is the "heir to PT HM Sampoerna". I don't think so as it's not his anymore: the Sampoerna family is incredibly wealthy having sold their 40% share in the cigarette company to Philip Morris for \$5.2 billion in 2005.

However, he is the founder of Sampoerna Strategic" which has a number of 'strategic' businesses. These include telecommunications, agriculture - a diversified plantation company currently engaged in the production of Germinated Oil Palm Seed, Crude Palm Oil and Palm Kernel, Slab Rubber and Sago, and forestry - among the top five tropical hardwood plywood producers globally.

There is also a property division



Standing gracefully with two magnificent towers, Sampoerna Strategic Square proudly distinguishes itself as a signature building in the heart of Jakarta with its unique glass dome and beautiful garden. While its exterior view entices, its interior embraces you with a warm welcome as you step into this luxurious iconic building.

This building was formerly known as Sudirman Square and the headquarters of Danamon Bank. Back in 2004 there were plans to turn one of the towers into a Sheraton Hotel. What is more, it is the coldest building I've ever been in, with the centralised air conditioning set at freezing throughout.

Apart from these company divisions, Putera Sampoerna founded and is a major partner in Mansion (Gibraltar) Limited, an online gambling company that operates casino and poker websites.

Online gambling is banned in the USA. The small state of Gibraltar is much more easy going: it is a tax haven and accounts of large companies "*are not available to the public*".

Manchester City Football Club fans may be interested to know that "*the global*

online gambling and entertainment business, Mansion Group, [is the] new International Betting Partner", having previously had their logo on the front of the Tottenham Hotspur shirts. (Now, in 2016, it's on the Brighton Albion FC shirts.)

Local football fans may well wonder why they couldn't be more involved in the Indonesian football leagues, but should know that gambling is illegal in Indonesia.

Of course, you can't really be a large Indonesian company without playing the Corporate Social Responsibility scam. For a start, there is a page of gobbledegook about Sampoerna Strategy's Sahabat microfinance programme.

Even with the power of 1205 reliable Human Resources we continue to innovate to develop products that suit the needs of the society, we continue to reach out and without stopping we take steps together to give you the best. Together with Sahabat, not just to give and serve, but to reach the current evidence in order to achieve in the future.

IF IT'S SAMPOERNA, YOU KNOW IT'S SEMPURNA (Perfect)

Well, it isn't 'perfect' in my estimation, not by a long mile. It's the Putra Sampoerna Foundation and, in particular, the Sampoerna Academy which gives me grave concern.

In support of the Ministry of National Education's initiative "*Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional*", Putera Sampoerna Foundation embarked on a complementary effort to provide deserving teens, students with excellent academic achievements and leadership character who come from the lowest economic quintile*, with access to an international standard high school education through Sampoerna Academy.

Sampoerna Academy is a partnership program between Putera Sampoerna Foundation and some provincial governments with a comprehensive boarding system to instill the values of leadership skills, morality, empathy, tolerance and social skills needed to facilitate the development of Indonesia's future leaders.

*fr. Webster's: quintile: the aspect of two celestial bodies 72° , or one fifth of a circle apart. *Eh?*

On the face of it, it seems to be a noble endeavour, not that I believe private businesses should be involved in the provision of schooling unless it's a vocational school providing skills training in, say, car mechanics. And, even then, the offering of apprenticeships would seem to be appropriate.

But it is what Putera Sampoerna says, somewhat gloatingly, in the interview that reveals his true motivation.

"For the Sampoerna Academy, we take the top five percent of academic achievers from junior high school and then select those that we believe have leadership potential.

'These students are the smartest, the hungriest and come from the poorest families. We have them in our boarding school for three years so we can instill our value system into their DNA. The values are leadership, entrepreneurship, and giving back to society.

"I do not give scholarships for my students. They have to pay me back a total of US\$15,000 spent for the three years in the academy.

"This is because I have invested in, let's say, you, a student from a poor village. I call it an equity investment. I will support you through school and find other people to support you through school. As soon as you get a job, I'm entitled to 20 percent of your income throughout your life."

So, these places aren't awarded for purely altruistic reasons but because they will offer him a financial return, and if it's 20% of future earnings "for life", then potentially great profits. The expression "instill [his] value system into their DNA" has a sinister connotation: brainwashing? The society they will give back to is his, not mine nor yours. That's even more sinister in my book as it smacks of a dictatorial fascism.

Given that he has brought a number of "sponsors" into the programme who can be expected to employ the graduates from his 'Academy', he is in a position to render them unemployable if they do not pay him his tithe.

In taking impressionable junior high school students, and tying them to an agreement for life, is surely a form of indentured labour, or debt bondage, as it is mediated through patronage relations which reduces the worker's personal autonomy to the degree that s/he is prevented from protecting her/his legitimate personal interests.

I would argue that it also contravenes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly Article 4 which states: **No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.**

I recognise that it is possible that there has been a mistranslation of Putera Sampoerna's actual words, or perhaps they have been edited out of context. However, considering that the bulk of his wealth has come from the evil weed and gambling, he's not a man I would entrust my son to.

Would you?

Notes (2016):

- This long link is a critique in Indonesian of the above article. Scroll down through the comments for the *klarifikasi* by the Putera Sampoerna Foundation. It substantially confirms the facts I have written about.

http://www.kompasiana.com/ragile/putera-sampoerna-bisnis-perbudakan-kepada-siswa-yang-dibantu_550e6ce6813311c12cbc654a

- For a variety of good reasons, Mansion is NOT recommended by this site:

<http://thepogg.com/casino-review/mansion/>

Jakartass has never been sued for defamation.. Although I am opinionated, I do try to keep a balance, or at least give links to sources I've used. I refer to Putere Sampoerna's own words in the next section. You can hear them for yourself by downloading this mp3, a clip from the video I link to

[:https://www.dropbox.com/s/kbbcbobm5cm1wuq/Putera%20Sampoerna%20sound%20clip.MP3?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/kbbcbobm5cm1wuq/Putera%20Sampoerna%20sound%20clip.MP3?dl=0)

Putera Sampoerna – Saint or Sinner? (July 2013)

Saint?

I must point out that PSF has indeed established 'centres of educational excellence in Indonesia', and a read of [this page](#) gives some confirmation of that.

Akademi Siswa Bangsa Internasional (ASBI) offers a holistic curriculum based on the Indonesian National Curriculum and 21st century learning that is supported by the Cambridge International Examination (International General Certificate of Secondary Education and International A Levels) and Advanced Placement (AP). All of our courses are in English. So when students graduate out of our school, they will be fluent in English and will qualify for any English-speaking university.

(It is to the government's shame that in spite of 20% of the annual budget being allocated to the public education sector, it is the private sector which attempts to offer the best facilities, though not necessarily the best education.)

ASBI emphasizes not only academic ability but also provides an educational experience at a world class standard that enables students to acquire and apply knowledge, concepts and skills. We equip our students with many different competencies including but not limited to: effective communication, collaboration and team work, decision making skills, problem solving and critical thinking abilities, creative thinking and the spirit of innovation information (eh?), media and technology literacy skills.

But, what is the ulterior motive of PSF?

Why is its mission "**Creating leaders with vision and integrity**"?

Education provides opportunity for children to reach their dreams. Unfortunately every four minutes, one kid has to dropout because of poverty. Putera Sampoerna Foundation's initiatives give students a chance to be Indonesia's future leaders.



Sampoerna Sponsored Students - "The Brightest of the Poorest"

Why is their uniform modelled on that of the Marines?

I wanted to know more, so I watched this more than hour-long [video](#), a paean of praise and self aggrandisement. It starts with an introduction which praises Mr. Sampoerna as being “*a true friend of America*”, which is sure to raise the hackles of many of you.

But then, the seminar was sponsored by the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) (CSIS) which “*since 1962, has been dedicated to finding ways to sustain American prominence and prosperity as a force for good in the world. After 50 years, CSIS has become one of the world’s pre-eminent international policy institutions focused on defense and security; regional stability; and transnational challenges ranging from energy and climate to global development and economic integration.*”

This is a pdf file of Mr. Sampoerna’s speech in which he states the following: “*Imagine the possibilities provided by thousands of American educated local scientists, scholars, public policy professionals, and business executives going back and contributing to the development of their home countries.*

Also consider what contribution the empathy of so many American-educated individuals towards their U.S. counterparts would bring towards our efforts to achieve peaceful co-existence. Peace and prosperity, you see, is actually less expensive than its alternative.

Isn’t it about time the paradigm shifted in U.S. international strategies: Instead of “Gunboat Diplomacy”, how about “Diploma Diplomacy” ... How about shifting from the World’s Policeman to the world’s Educator?

If I am not mistaken, the ratio between the annual costs of supporting university students to soldiers deployed overseas in non-combat areas is 1:3.”

That might sound somewhat idealistic until you focus on what kind of “leaders” he’d like to breed: (local) *American educated scientists, scholars, public policy professionals, and business executives.*

Aren’t these the very same folk who’ve got the planet in the mess it’s in?



Later this year, Universitas Siswa Bangsa Internasional (USBI) and Lone Star College (LSC) will open the **first accredited U.S. Associate Degree program** offered in Indonesia.

The Sampoerna Foundation is building the university and the Associate Degree program based on the amalgamation of its two existing colleges – the Sampoerna School of Business and the Sampoerna School of Education.

Part 2 - A Healthy Dose of Scepticism

In 2001, PSF started out as a “philanthropic foundation” offering “scholarships” to bright high school students and undergraduates from financially impoverished families. By any definition, a scholarship is a gift and, as will be outlined below, the

Sampoerna family could afford to fund them from petty cash. In November last year, Putera was [9th on the Forbes Indonesia Rich List](#) with \$2.3 billion.

However, in 2009 the Koperasi Siswa Bangsa (KSB) was established by alumni and the previous “scholarships” offered to bright students from poor families became student loans. In other words, a credit union was established.

(The [KSB website](#) is a one page JPEG weighing a massive 636kb, which in itself offers a negative perception of the IT component of the curriculum taught in PSF education institutes.)

The foundation continued to [refer to scholarships](#) last year, presumably because altruistic actions are generally applauded. To be fair, the term ‘loans’ only crops up this year and the word used from 2009 onwards in their history is ‘assistance’.

And it is this aspect of the PSF operations which became newsworthy in June. They are operating a charm offensive to counteract complaints from parents of students at the Sampoerna Academy in Malang that their [children were being coerced into signing](#) a three-year debt contract with the foundation.

The principal of SMA South Sumatra, the Sampoerna Academy in Palembang, Erma Retnowati confirmed this a week later when [she was quoted](#) as saying that *“students are required to be accountable for the costs which have been provided by donors by making achievements.”*

Naturally, CSF used their press room to [explain at some length](#) (in bhs. Indonesia) their student loan policy as well as exercising their [right of reply](#) by saying that *“the ‘chip-in’ fund was done by the State Student Cooperatives (Koperasi Siswa Bangsa) consisting of alumni of Sampoerna Academy.” Furthermore, the fund (Rp. 150 million) could be paid in 30 years without interest.* (Note: this is not the three years that the Malang parents were complaining about.)

“This agreement (the educational contract) was bound to all Sampoerna Academy graduates first batch last year.”

Given that 55 is the retirement age in Indonesia, then a 30 year repayment period is a working lifetime. Furthermore, “bound” (and gagged?) suggests that there was no coercion: it was compulsion!

I await with interest the report from Parliament’s People’s Welfare Commission from the Parliament who inspected the Malang Sampoerna Academy on the 20th of June after receiving the parents’ complaints.

The following poorly proofread [press release](#) was issued by PSF in July last year.

Dana Siswa Bangsa is the first student assistance, in the form of non collateral loans, in Indonesia that provides financing solution for top-scoring students with leadership potentials wishing to continue to tertiary level without placing financial burden on their families. Their contributions will begin six months after graduating college/university and earn their own income.

The college/university graduates are expected to contribute 20% of their salaries

during their productive working age. The contributions will be distributed through Koperasi Siswa Bangsa to finance the next generation of students in pursuing higher education.

So [my original post](#) from a year ago is substantially correct and we should remain perturbed by the continued self interest of PSF.

The article about the Palembang Academy in the Post was written by their local stringer [Ansyor Idrus](#), who the next day followed it up with [another](#) which highlighted the undoubted scientific achievements of the Academy's students.

However, I feel justified in suggesting that due to the timing, so close to the bad news emanating from Malang, Mr. Idrus may have been 'conned' into writing his articles. After all, as this [wiki page](#) suggests, there are other "top schools" in Palembang!

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Part 3 - Sinner!

[Putera Sampoerna](#) : *Through four pillars of activities, Putera Sampoerna Foundation (PSF) is committed to create Indonesian future leaders and entrepreneurs of high caliber with strong moral fiber to meet global challenges.*

Given the major sources of the wealth of the Sampoerna conglomerate, I would question what right PSF has to instill "moral fiber" in its students.

On May 18th 2005, Philip Morris International (PMI) completed [the acquisition](#) of 97.95% of [PT Hanjaya Mandala Sampoerna Tbk.](#), the Sampoerna tobacco company. A block of approximately 40% of the outstanding stock was sold by the controlling Sampoerna family, especially by Putera Sampoerna and other insiders (i.e. family members [including](#) Sinta Dewi, Villia, Soenarni, Boedi and Sulistiani Sampoerna – the latter now deceased?) in a negotiated transaction. The series of transactions valued the company at approximately \$5.2 billion. Which meant that Putera and his "insiders" trousered c.\$2.08 billion.

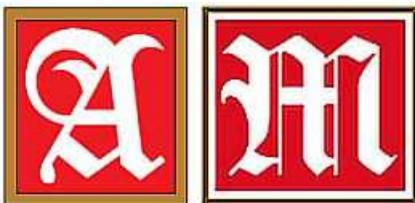
At the time, the 58 year old [Putera Sampoerna said](#) that *the sale was the right thing to do because PMI was positioned to foster growth of Sampoerna in terms of sales of kreteks. Although Sampoerna for the past year had recorded the highest revenue in the past ten years, he stated, the cigarette business would get tougher in Indonesia. In order to sustain the growth, Sampoerna would have to venture overseas.* The Sampoerna family, he said, was now looking for re-investments in other areas, possibly agriculture and infrastructure.

[Sampoerna Agro](#) is one of Indonesia's largest plantation companies. You can download their 2012 Annual Report (pdf) from [here](#).

A couple of years ago, PT. Union Sampoerna Triputra Persada (USTP) "*a rapidly growing company in the field of oil palm plantations*", was one of several companies [castigated for relocating orangutans](#) to the Nyarumenteng Reintroduction Center, managed by the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation near Palangkaraya.

“Hardi Baktiantoro, the center’s habitat campaigner, said that rather than this program being a success, the relocation of orangutans from their original habitats exemplified the government’s failure to protect the species.”

I wouldn’t include gambling in the “infrastructure” sector but that is where Sampoerna has been highly visible. In 2003, an online gambling company [Mansion.com](#) was **established** and **registered in Gibraltar**.



From one addiction to another

In 2006, Manchester United had been set to sign a huge £70m deal with gaming company Mansion, but talks broke down after **the club raised concerns about being associated with a gambling operation**.

There were no such qualms for **Tottenham Hotspur** and Mansion remained their shirt sponsor until 2010. From 2011 until the end of last season, **Manchester City** were the recipient of Mansion’s largesse.

Offshore Accounts – Tax Evasion?

Between 2001 and 2010, Global Financial Integrity *estimated that **US\$109 billion was illicitly transferred out of Indonesia***.

Country/Region	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Illicit Outflows
Indonesia	0.32	2.87	15.12	17.64	11.38	12.72	15.49	16.54	11.56	5.21	108.86

That is more than **Indonesia’s foreign currency reserves** at the end of June! Another comparison is that **fuel subsidies cost about \$20 billion** in 2012.

At least one offshore account is, or has been, controlled by a member of the Sampoerna family. On May 31 2005, two weeks after the sale of their tobacco company, **TrustNet** established an offshore trust called **Strong Castle Trust** in the Cook Islands. Sulistiani Sampoerna is listed in the TrustNet files as “trust settlor”, possibly indicating it was her money the trust was to hold. Her address was given as Jl. Ambengan No.19. RT/RW Ketabang, Surabaya.

Download Secrecy For Sale: Inside the Global Offshore Money Maze

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Ties to SBY

In June 2006, two years after Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono won the presidency, the Sampoerna family started **Jurnal Nasional**, a daily newspaper in Jakarta. Political opponents of Yudhoyono – even journalists who work for the paper – say the

publication's content is controlled from the Merdeka Palace, Indonesia's White House. Sunaryo Sampoerna, an art collector and a nephew of Putera, was chairman of PT Media Nusa Perdana, which publishes the newspaper.

In order "to encourage better, more accurate writing", the Anugerah Adiwarta Sampoerna is an annual award for Indonesian print media journalists and photographers covering legal, arts, business and environmental matters.

To the best of JPSF's knowledge, this Award was initiated and organized by PT HM Sampoerna Tbk. The Award ceremonies are always filled with Sampoerna banners, logo and souvenirs. The juries have included Sampoerna executives.

Wahyu Dhyatmika, leader of Jakarta's Alliance of Independent Journalists, said, "*On top of their advertising and sponsorship, the journalist award is a very effective method to reach out to the subconscious of journalists,*"

There is another thread in the Sampoerna - Yudhoyono connection: Putera Sampoerna hosts Yudhoyono's youngest son, Edhie Baskoro, the Democratic Party secretary-general, in an office inside his Sampoerna Strategic Square tower, in Jakarta. The 27-year-old politician has a whole floor for himself.

Sources: [Andreas Harsono](#) and the [Center for Public Integrity](#)

Part 4. Putera Sampoerna – Traitor?

*We are controlled by tiny corporate entities that have **no loyalty to the nation** and indeed in **the language of traditional patriotism are traitors.** They strip us of our resources, keep us politically passive and enrich themselves at our expense.*

– Robert E. Gamer: [Developing Nations: A Comparative Perspective](#)

"No loyalty to the nation?"

Excerpt from a profile in [The Peak magazine](#) (Sept. 2011)

After a long career of success, in which he made his family's company into one of the most successful in the country, Putera Sampoerna says his business days are totally behind him.

Putera says that since the day he was born, he has been surrounded by people who believe in the virtues of hard work and dedication. It's a value he has passed on to his children, and one he wants to pass on to the rest of Indonesia. Despite having been born and educated abroad, Putera says he is dedicated to Indonesia and is proud to be a citizen of the country. "*Indonesia has shaped who my family is today,*" he said. "*And it's time to give back.*"

Putera now lives in Singapore with his wife Kathleen.

The language?

Language is but a tool, but it must be used with care. My Indonesian is not strong enough to grasp the many levels and subtleties of the language, but my English most certainly is. If Putera Sampoerna chooses to use English, and he has a distinct, albeit faint, American accent when he speaks, then I am justified in offering

this criticism, and my opinions of the man based on what he has said and written, and what others say about him in his presence.

His 'Pearls of Wisdom'

There is a page on [his blog](#) – yes, he's copied my example – containing *bon mots* presumably intended for the students in his various educational institutions.

Glossing over Winston Churchill's alleged quote: "Keep Bugging On!!!", several references can be found to the fact that many students, being Indonesian, are Muslim.

I don't know what religion PS has on his KTP, the Indonesian ID card meant to be carried at all times, but I suspect that he is Christian. He should know that in the New Testament it says this: *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.*

Matthew 7:6

Suggesting that some, many or any, of his students are 'swine' (pigs, hogs, etc.) is incredibly offensive. Furthermore, as Michael Quinion, a lexicographer of some repute, [explains](#): *The idea goes back ... to one of the oldest books of the Bible:*

No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. (Job, chapter 28, verse 18)

These days 'pearls of wisdom' has to be classed as a cliché, a hackneyed phrase whose shine has been worn off through constant repetition.

So, methinks it's time for PS to go back to (language) school.

Students in the PSF educational institutes profess five different religions. For whatever reason, practical, financial or spiritual, PS is to be congratulated for his ecumenical approach. However, if he really does think of his students as 'swine', then he is subliminally alerting us to his true intentions which are ...

Messianic or Fascist Tendencies?

In entrapping students into a working life of servitude – the [30-year student loan repayment programme](#) run by PSF graduates – PS seems to be echoing Jesus who, in Matthew 4:19, "... *said unto them, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.*" (Or fishers of boys and girls?)

(Read this [evangelical sermon](#) but substitute 'Putera Sampoerna' for 'God' and 'PSF' for 'church', then try and spot the differences – if there are any.)

Intellectually immature yet academically gifted children of financially disadvantaged parents are easy targets. There are few parents who don't wish the best for their children and don't want them to fulfil their potential. Having PSF reach out and grab them, to feed, clothe and house them, and to put them through international schooling with other 'gifted' children, must be like winning a lottery or being struck by lightning. (The odds against either are very low, and both have potentially dangerous consequences.)

PS is by no means the first 'visionary' to 'take' children from their parents.

Robert Owen (1771-1858), who owned a mill town, **New Lanark** (now a UNESCO World Heritage Site), was a philanthropist and social reformer and early co-operative pioneer. At that time, other factory owners paid their workers in part or totally with tokens, which were only redeemable in the company store, which often supplied shoddy goods at extortionate prices. Owen's, however, were discounted retail shops whose profits were passed on to his employees.



Two Philanthropists
Who does or did the greater good?

Through the practical application of his 'socialist' vision, which included model housing, Owen came to believe that man's character is made by circumstances over which he had no control, "*that he is not a proper subject either of praise or blame.*"

In 1813 Owen published two of the four essays in **A New View of Society**; or, *Essays on the Principle of the Formation of the Human Character*, in which he expounded the principles on which his system of educational philanthropy was based.

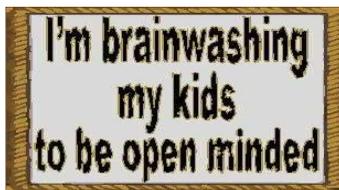
These principles lead him to the practical conclusion that the great secret in the right formation of man's character is to place him under the proper influences – physical, moral and social – from his earliest years. Hence, Owen became an early pioneer of elementary schooling, what the Indonesian government calls 'character building'.

Contrast that with the neo-capitalism of Putera Sampoerna (1947-?) whose foundation (PSF) *is committed to create Indonesian future leaders and entrepreneurs of high caliber with strong moral fiber.*

A PSF student, Anto commented on **The Usefulness of a University Education**.

"After spending 7 years in the university, my conclusion is [that] higher education does not contribute much in changing a person's mindset. I found that one's character, mindset and intellectuality does not change. Is it possible that these characters / factors have been permanently shaped during elementary school and high school?"

Of course they are Anto, and surely that is why PS tells us that since 2005 PSF's **School Development Outreach** (SDO), which is aimed at improving the quality of schools, including the quality of educators and educational staff, *has served 118 schools and 9 madrasas involving 23,000 teachers. These programs are delivered through a comprehensive whole school development approach.*



As a qualified and professional educator through most of my working life, I have to ask the following:

- In saying that “true to the mandate of the Constitution (UUD), education is indeed the government’s responsibility”, what right does PSF have to run ‘leadership’ programmes?
- Who trains the teacher-trainers, and what is the educational philosophy and classroom methodology they are inculcating?

In *The Social System* (1826), Robert Owen wrote: “**To train and educate the rising generation will at all times be the first object of society, to which every other will be subordinate.**”

Yes, in spite of 20% of the country’s annual budget being allocated to the education sector, as mandated by the Constitution, and, yes, academically bright children do need education to enhance their talents as, indeed, do all children, I agree that Indonesia lags behind other countries in this sector. I’ve been saying this on Jakartass for over nine years.

However, in allowing the Putera Sampoerna Foundation to run its stated programmes, we are witnessing yet another delegation of responsibility, a capitulation to a non-accountable self-elected élite by the nation’s elected representatives who are, for better or seemingly worse, those chosen to be the country’s leaders.

Why CSIS and not the Indonesian Government?

“The structures of power that exist are working to their own ends to extend their own capability at the expense of the freedom of our publics.”

– **Edward Snowden**

The **Center for Strategic and International Studies** (CSIS) is not to be confused with the **Centre for Strategic and International Studies** (Indonesia), a think tank for the government on social, international, political and economic issues whose **mission** is to contribute to improved policy making through policy-oriented research, dialogue, and **public debate**.

Those two emboldened words encapsulate what the CSIS sponsoring Putera Sampoerna is not. A quick glance at its [Board of Trustees page](#) should make that patently clear. Start with Henry Kissinger, former director of Freeport, whose [hands were bloodied in Indonesia](#) before he became an architect of the Vietnam war.

The key questions I've been reaching for in this series are these:

- Why is “leadership potential” a priority in the PSF programs?
- Furthermore, why is PSF doing this in partnership with American neo-cons?

The answers are clearly articulated in this recorded [hour long CSIS Seminar](#) – skip to minute 41. I've cut an excerpt and converted it to [an .mp3 file](#) so you can listen along as PS says:

“I don't have to educate everybody. I can educate the best.”

“We take in the top 5% academically from middle schools (SMP), and then put them through a very rigorous ‘culling’ process for those kids who show leadership potential.”

“The cooperative has clients – partnerships with corporations such as Exxon ... and Citibank who take the kids (i.e. post university graduation) on a ‘bonded’ basis.”

*“I don't have to solve the country's education (sic); that's for my Minister of Education to solve.” (Eh? **His** Minister of Education?)*

The following ‘anecdote’ can also be read in the closing paragraph of this [interview](#).

A lady journalist asked me at a press conference: “Putera, why are you doing all this?”

I sat there and said, “Have you seen my kids? They're top notch, right?”

“Yes.”

“I've got 250 kids out there. Our Parliament is made up of 500 individuals. Now imagine if our parliament was made up of 250 of my kids.

“There's nothing to say ... it's obvious.”

Yes, it is.



However, I'll leave it to conspiracy theorists to determine (and prove) whether Putera Sampoerna is planning a coup.

He is obviously furthering his “dream” in league with American neo-cons and multi-national corporations; this could well fit in with the [‘world government’](#) plans of Exxon, Citibank, the Rockefellers, the Rothschilds and the masons.

So ... ?

Browse the quarterly reports [here](#) to glean who the mostly upmarket partners are.

Mea culpa – ‘Er Indoors has reminded me that a dozen years or so ago, we hobnobbed with the Sampoerna clan on their island, one of the supposed 1000 in Jakarta Bay, and that their rather expensive yacht brought us back to shore.

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Jim Keady - A Crusader (January 2012)

The medieval Crusades were 'Holy Wars', pitting European Christians defending their religious realm against expansionist Muslims. Atrocities were committed by both sides, a situation which has persisted for nigh on a thousand years, as can be witnessed on an almost daily basis here in Indonesia.

However, in labelling 39 year old Jim Keady as "a Crusader", I am referring to the fourteen (count 'em!) years of his single-minded efforts to achieve basic human rights for the workers in the Indonesia's sweat shops producing Nike sports goods for export, goods that the workers cannot afford on their earned income. As I will point out a bit further on, it is worth noting that many of the companies sub-contracted to Nike are Korean, albeit with Indonesian partners. The workers are mostly Muslims whereas Jim is a committed Christian and sometime teacher of religious education to American high school students.



Having supported Jim's work through this blog for a few years, we finally met up last Sunday for a couple of hours. Much of what follows is gleaned from our chat, as well as the immense coverage on the internet of his fine work.

I knew that he was forced to resign from his New York university; he was studying for his master's degree in pastoral theology) when he refused to wear the sponsored sports gear from Nike, because of their operation of sweat shops, i.e. cheap labour working onerous hours. What must have exacerbated things was the title of his thesis: "*Nike and Catholic Social Teaching: A Challenge to the Christian Mission at St. John's University,*" examining the company's business practices and challenging the university's sponsorship agreement with Nike.

He was also not given a renewed contract by his semi-professional football club where, he told me he was 'understudy' to Tim Howard, the current Everton FC goalkeeper, as well as being an assistant coach. Now 39, Jim told me that he would have been satisfied to have been on the bench as reserve goalie at a major match, but it was not to be. He also told me that, unlike me, he had visited Charlton's new stadium at the Valley and was a fan of Charlton, having also visited their training ground.

He still looks very fit; he had been for a workout that morning and was tucking in to a substantial meal at Ya 'Udah when I arrived.

Having formed Team Sweat, to highlight the sweat shop issue in 'Third World' countries, Jim works alone, albeit with an expanding group of supporters who through their donations support him. I asked a number of questions, which arose through our conversation rather than prepared beforehand.

For example, I wondered whether there were any prominent sports stars prepared to be associated with him. Tiger Woods of Planet Golf and Roger Federer wear Nike gear, but neither were doing very well in June 2010 when I noted the football stars featured in TV ads coinciding with the World Cup in South Africa. None of them did very well: Theo Walcott of England and Ronaldinho of Brazil didn't get to go and Cesc Fábregas played just 59 minutes of Spain's four matches.

But I digress, and my question was somewhat naive anyway. After all, who'd want to bad-mouth their kit sponsor when they're paid vast sums to wear it? In 1998, for example, Nike paid Tiger Woods \$28 million. (Contrast that with the \$100,000 spent in Indonesia from 1998 to 2000 on continuing education programmes for Nike workers and \$150,000 on small loans to unemployed and disadvantaged people.)

I did wonder why Jim works alone and also why he focusses on the Nike sub-contractors in Indonesia; wouldn't a broad coalition be more effective? As the Nike Anti-Sweatshop campaign says, it "is one branch of a larger global movement aimed at raising awareness about labor conditions in manufacturing zones of developing nations where major global corporations increasingly contract for the manufacture of their products. There are hundreds of web sites concerning these issues." (Actually, many thousands.)

Furthermore, Nike isn't the only American corporation whose products are produced in factories abroad which operate free of the health, safety and labour laws in force, but not always enforced, in the USA. (Think Apple: they knowingly used child labour and outsourced workers in China whose "horrendous" working conditions were such that at least 19 were driven to suicide.)

One factor Jim mentioned to me was that it is common for NGO's to be sucked in by the perks offered by such conglomerates as Nike. Offers of all-expenses paid factory tours abroad and round table meetings can be seductive. You can see that first hand here in Jakarta. I've often thought it strange that I should be paid no more than adequate amount for teaching the children of rich parents, whilst international NGO staff ostensibly working on behalf of the downtrodden masses live in upmarket areas with the usual expat perks.

Jim's approach is radically different: he spends time living with Nike factory workers on \$1.25 (then c.Rp. 11,500) a day, a typical wage paid to the workers.

He has had meetings with union officials such as Siti Nurrofiqoh, the Chairperson of Bangkit Labour Union (*Serikat Buruh Bangkit* or SBB), who is deeply appreciative of Jim's efforts, and wrote to Jim as follows: Union officials at PT SM Global, managed by Koreans, in Tangerang, "received pressure, repeated rotation of their positions, [were] downgraded, and [were] blamed by the management of the factory

in front of all the workers saying that the factory will be closed as a result of the action of union officials ... [thus] ... making the union officials as the public enemy for the workers."

The 'workers were requested to sign a pre-arranged statement stating that they were in good condition, have no problem, and will not demanding anything."



"Good conditions"? Only if the workers were prepared to accept an obligatory three hours of overtime per day, and that the women workers would show blood-stained sanitary towels when seeking their mandatory two days menstrual leave.

That last degrading action has been a long lasting practice in factories managed by Koreans. I first heard of the practice during a football match some 20 years ago when one of the opposing team highlighted the issue, and stated that the women were forced to stand in the open, under the tropical sun, whilst undergoing the inspection. On that occasion, the managers were deported.

Maybe that is also the standard practice too in Korea; Koreans are not noted here for much beyond their kimchi, and brutality which I witnessed at first hand when a teacher at the Jakarta Korean International School (JKIS) for three years until Xmas 2003. I was horrified at their use of the "love stick" (and occasional fists) to administer corporal punishments.

As for focussing on Nike, it is the industry leader, and Jim says that if they change then others will have to follow their lead.

Indonesia is Nike's third largest manufacturing base, behind China and Vietnam, with 140,000 workers in 14 factories, and productivity is high. For example, 18,000 workers at PT Nikomas produce more than 2,000,000 pairs of Nike sneakers per month. If you discount the administrative and warehouse staff, drivers, security guards, and other non-assembly line staff, that's c.four+ pairs a day per worker sold retail for anywhere between \$50 to \$500.

For 18 years workers at Nikomas complained about forced overtime and wage cheating, but is only now, after a year's hard work of research, lobbying and

negotiations that a breakthrough has been achieved with Jim Keady's help, lobbying and single-minded focus.

He is now proud to report that following almost a year of investigation and negotiation, 4,437 Nike factory workers will be paid \$1 million dollars for overtime they were forced to do without payment. The settlement between SPN and the factory management reflects 593,468 of unpaid overtime hours that workers put in sewing Nike sneakers at the plant during the past two years.

But his work is not done yet; Indonesian law only allows redress for the past two years so that's 16 years of unpaid overtime and a further few thousand workers at Nikomas who are not part of the deal. There are also another 13 factories which are not yet party to such a deal.

I'm not a psychoanalyst, nor am I particularly enamoured of the notion of having another's hang ups hung on you, so I can only surmise that Jim's single minded-focus and self-sacrifice comes from his wellspring of Christian faith. That may be why his chosen position in a football team was goalkeeper, a position which demands the utmost concentration and patience, with a readiness to spring into action when required.

I've generally played as a defender, and I'm happy to have such a role supporting Jim in his humanitarian crusade.

.....
One further point: friend Oigal asked about Nike's lack of oversight of their sub-contractors here: When do countries like Indonesia have to take responsibility for their own affairs?

Whilst employers here often ignore the prevailing labour law, Act No 13, 2003, and seek amendments to their advantage regarding severance pay, this week the Constitutional Court annulled Articles 59, 64-66 regarding contract and outsourced workers, stating that *"every company carrying out short-term projects had an obligation to treat their contract workers and permanent staff equally."*

.....
John H. McGlynn - Lontar Foundation (April 2014)

"If the word of God had come down to the Indonesian archipelago, this is where it would have remained."

- John H. McGlynn, Co-founder and Chairman of Lontar Foundation

For much of the world, Indonesia is an exotic country next to Bali, and Java is where coffee comes from. It's viewed as a land of smiles, of gamelan, spices, volcanoes, komodo dragons, and photogenic rice terraces.

It's also seen in the international media as a country of natural and manmade disasters: tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, plane crashes, deforestation and occasional terrorism.

There are few foreigners who make the effort to dig deeper, to discover what makes Indonesia tick. One Jakarta expat who has, and has also done more than

most of us to help us understand what makes Indonesia tick, is John McGlynn.

Although we have friends in common, we hadn't previously met nor had I visited the Lontar Foundation's centre in a backstreet of Central Jakarta. From the outside, it is a modern looking house, but once inside I was impressed by the comfortable decor: dark wooden floors creaked, several alcoves were lined with full but tidy wooden book shelves, and there were enough comfy rattan chairs to provide the familiarity of a well-run library. I was impressed too by the large oil paintings which couldn't readily be categorised as 'Indonesian art', but added to the ambiance.



The purpose of our meeting was to discuss Lontar which is noted for its translations into English of Indonesian 'literature', an often capitalised word which, as a non-academic, I viewed with some trepidation.

I was taught to analyse 'classic novels' rather than to consider the stories and the background circumstances of the writing. However, John defines 'literature', in the broadest sense of the word, "as ranging from research reports, academic treatises, and patent schemes all the way up to film-scripts, comic novels, and poetry."

John first came here in 1976 to study Indonesian, which he did first in Malang and later in Jakarta, at the University of Indonesia. In 1978 he returned to the USA to complete his university studies, gaining a Masters Degree in Indonesian Literature at the University of Michigan in 1981. Thereafter he returned to Indonesia and it was while working as a freelance translator that he, along with Indonesian writers Sapardi Djoko Damono, Goenawan Mohamad, Subagio Sastrowardoyo and Umar Kayam decided to found Lontar in 1987.

Lontar is primarily John's 'baby'. As Pak Goenawan has said, "*John works single-mindedly for our purpose: to bring Indonesian literary expressions to the world.*"

Even for a polyglot, that's no easy matter. The lingua franca during the Dutch colonial era was Malay, the language developed throughout the region by traders over a thousand years. It was originally written in an Indic script and then, after the coming of Islam to the archipelago, in an Arabic-based script called Jawi.

Then in 1901 the Dutch linguist Charles van Ophuijsen introduced a more systematic spelling system, one that conformed with Dutch spelling practices. In 1947, after the revolution of Indonesian independence, this spelling system was replaced with the *Ejaan Yang Disempurnakan* (Improved Spelling). The EYD system thus represents the third orthographic change.

Indonesian grew with Javanese, spoken by the majority, and other regional languages added to the complexity. It was not until 1972 that the EYD system was agreed with Malaysia, which had English and its own regional languages

contributing to the mix, and hence Soeharto became Suharto, and Djakarta became ...

Jawi script

كیلاون اینتن برکلیف-کلیف دلاغیت تیغگی،
دان چهای مناری-ناری دلاغیت بیرو،
تیدقله دافت منتعکن قراسانگی،
یغ ریندوکن کحاضیرن کاسیه.

گمرسیق ایرام مردو بولوه قریندو،
دان یایین قاری آ دري کایغن،
تیدقله دافت تنترمکن ساتوباری،
یغ مندمیاکن کھستین کاسیهمو.

Rumi script

*Kilauan intan berkelip-kelip di langit tinggi,
Dan cahaya menari-nari di langit biru,
Tidaklah dapat menenangkan perasaanku,
Yang rindukan kehadiran kasih.

Gemersik irama merdu buluh perindu,
Dan nyanyian pari-pari dari kayangan,
Tidaklah dapat tenteramkan sanubari,
Yang mendambakan kepastian kasihmu.*

All this was largely irrelevant to most Indonesians, the large percentage of whom could not read or write. In rural Indonesia and urban kampungs the fantasy worlds of such Hindu classics as the Ramayana and Mahabarata stories were related by a visiting *dalang* (puppet master) who relayed their moral values, and during Soeharto's Orde Baru often inserted his political messages.

In 1870, some of the Dutch-founded schools opened the doors for bumiputera (native Indonesians), albeit a privileged few. Moreover, it was not until 1950 that a six year programme of compulsory elementary schooling was introduced to newly independent Indonesia.

Hence, when Soeharto assumed power in 1966 the literacy rate was c.50%. The adoption of "The Functional Literacy Program", which ran from 1966 to 1979 and was followed by other programmes, raised the literacy rate for adults to c.83% and for children to c.90% in 1998, the year Suharto (was) stood down. However, their aim was for economic, productive reasons rather than for freedom of thought.

By contrast, writing, especially fiction, offers the context of 'place' and, in John's words, "the better books have real people in them" and can therefore be subversive: much of Indonesian literature has the nationalist struggle as the historical background. Post-independence, with the bureaucracy and military at their disposal, Presidents Soekarno and Soeharto imprisoned and exiled writers.

The dawn of *reformasi* in 1998 and the growth of the internet and other communications technology has seen many more Indonesians speaking out via text messages, blogs, social media and novels.

However, what John wrote in an essay ***Silenced Voices, Muted Expressions*** for an anthology of *New Writing From Indonesia: Indonesian Literature Today* published by the University of Hawai'i in 2000, still holds true today. He wrote: "Having grown up under constraints of freedom of expression and inquiry, an entire generation has been traumatized into becoming a society of silence and avoidance.

Not until today's young people have unlearned the ways of repression and a new generation has been educated to respect and defend its right to freedom of expression will true openness and democracy come to Indonesia."

There is also the need to foster a love of reading in early childhood which John believes should start at home. However, although I think that schools have a greater role to play, many parents and teachers still have the mindset inculcated during Suharto's régime, and only those who are enlightened, rather than blinkered with prejudices or self-interest, will encourage the freedom of thought engendered by easy access to fiction.

Good writing comes from wide reading, and access to it. So one of Lontar's goals is *"to stimulate the further development of Indonesian literature."*

In addition to its library of printed materials containing more than 3,000 books and other texts related to Indonesian literature, the foundation maintains a digital library [which] provides preservation and access to materials produced and gathered by the foundation over its 20+ year history including:

- videos from the Indonesian Writers Series, Indonesian Performance Traditions, and Wayang Kulit/Shadow Puppet Theater Series
- audio interviews and recordings with Indonesian authors and witnesses from significant events in Indonesian history.
- archival photographs of traditional manuscripts, colonial-era postcards, and historical images from the New Order to the present.

Frankfurt Book Fair 2015

John says that the aim of Lontar is to *"promote knowledge of Indonesia through its literature"*, and it is natural that he is a member of the 'Indonesian National Committee for Preparing Indonesia as Guest of Honour in Frankfurt – 2015'.

The first Frankfurt Book Fair was held soon after Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable type printing press in around 1439. Revived in 1949, it is now the world's largest and most prestigious book fair. Since 1986 a country, or region, has been chosen as 'Guest of Honour'.

However, with several government ministries and a large number of departments involved, as well as the Goethe Institut, Lontar and others, he thinks preparations should have been started earlier than the end of last year, if only to have a larger range of books at Frankfurt.

Over the years, John has worked with more than 100 translators and is well aware of the time required to produce a literary translation that *"is both felicitous to the original text and appealing to the target audience"*. However, a worrisome fact is that of those 100 translators "no more than a dozen are both truly fluent both in Indonesian and English."

John further notes that *"for the rest, a heavy dose of editing is usually required."*

However, some good news has recently been received: the Ministry of Education and Culture has established a translation funding program, the I-Lit (Indonesian

Literature in Translation) Program..

For those who like to carry many books on their travels, the Kindle is ideal, John says, but we both agreed that with such devices something is lost. Printed books are shared, and one can learn a lot about folk by browsing their shelves of well-thumbed books.

Lontar books are available in Indonesia at Periplus bookstores and abroad through Amazon as print-on-demand paperbacks. They are also available as e-books through Book Cyclone.

Website: <http://lontar.org/>

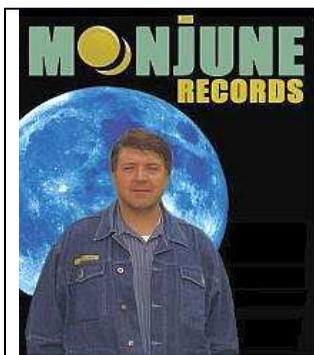
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Indonesian MoonJune - Leonardo Pavkovic (November 2012)

The Bali Tourism Development Corporation (BTDC), organisers of the annual Nusa Dua Fiesta, running from Nov. 2nd through Nov. 5th, is collaborating with ethnomusicologist Franki Raden to organize the Indonesian Music Expo (IMEX) 2012, "a two-day world music celebration featuring outstanding Indonesian and international musicians."

IMEX will also feature a seminar on the music industry with "a distinguished keynote speaker" from New York, Leonardo Pavkovic. The seminar's topic will be "Indonesian Music in the Global Market".

He is an apposite choice. In 2001, he founded MoonJune Records in New York with the aim of providing jazz and progressive rock musicians from different continents and different cultural backgrounds with a very personal, hands-on relationship with a label. That he speaks six languages helps immeasurably to establish personal relationships: he considers the artists as friends.



Leonardo says that *"the ongoing goal of MoonJune is to support music that transcends stylistic pigeon-holing, but operates within an evolutionary progressive musical continuum that places jazz at one end and rock at the other."*

The ever-expanding boundaries of these two musical categories have since come to include everything from progressive rock to ethno-jazz, from experimental avant-garde to jazz-rock, and anything in between."

He has a particular fondness for Indonesia and its music (and food), having visited many times in order to liaise with the groups whose albums he

releases or as a tour manager for various international artists. (He was most recently in Jakarta as tour manager for several blues artists who were booked for the Jakarta Blues Festival on October 13th.)

Since 2007, Leonardo has been an enthusiastic promoter of Indonesian jazz-rock music through his release of several albums, much of it incorporating an ethnic flavour. Of particular note are the recordings of simakDialog lead by Riza Arshad, a mentor to many young jazz musicians. Of Riza's playing, Leonardo says that he has "*the sensibility of an ECM artist*".. That is rare praise indeed, and he encouraged Riza "*to liberate himself and challenge his artistic ego with evolutionary and free music spirit, without being afraid to say musically what he wants to say.*"

For the third simakDialog album, *Trance Mission*, Riza replaced the drummer with three percussionists who play 'traditional' Sundanese instruments such as *kendang*, *kanrang* and *ceng ceng*. After hearing that album, Leonardo has since released simakDialog's *Patahan* (MJR015, 2007) and *Demi Masa* (MJR024, 2009), with a fifth due early next year.

Meanwhile, the guitarist Tohpati, who has had a long and illustrious career as a session musician for the likes of top Indonesian pop stars such as Krisdayanti and Chrisye, is now rapidly forging an international reputation mentioned in the same rank as Terje Rypdal and John McLaughlin.

Tohpati has branched out from simakDialog with the release of two albums on MoonJune: Tohpati Ethnomission's *Save The Planet* (MJR035 2010) in the vein of simakDialog, and, earlier this year, Tohpati Bertiga's *Riot* (MJR045 2012). These are two very different albums, yet reflect Leonardo's personal and eclectic music tastes.

Tohpati Bertiga, a trio as the name suggests, Adityo 'Bowo' Wibowo, who has played European Blues Festivals with Gugun Bluesbug, is on drums. Their music evinces a telepathic rapport among three friends, with superb soloing and a relentless gritty rhythm.

Leonardo says that "*this album further cements Tohpati's rightful place among the highest echelon of today's guitar giants.*" *Riot* will give his fans hours of joy playing air guitar in front of their mirrors, and the rest of us should play it while driving along an empty *jalan tol*, if you can find one.

Another Indonesian guitar-lead power trio is Ligo whose *Dictionary 2* (MJR047 2012) was released to international acclaim earlier this year. With Agam Hamzah's amazingly agile and fluent playing underpinned by the solid backing of bassist Adi Darmawan and busy drummer Gusti Hendi; the album has a greater improvisational feel than Tohpati's Bertiga.

Agam cites John 'Mahavishnu' McLaughlin as *"the one in jazz who structured modern composition between free form ideas and rock guitar strike, with skillful improvisation."*

Jazz-rock enthusiasts will recognise this, but have fun spotting Agam's other major influences; yet he is very much his own man. Attendees at the Gili Trawangan Jazz Festival in April this year thrilled by the sheer inventiveness of Ligo, who played for 73 minutes non-stop.

First stop Lombok, next the world? Agam hopes so. He says that he realizes that the MoonJune release *"is a big opportunity for me and Ligo to have an international career. I also hope I will be one of the Indonesian musicians able to contribute to jazz worldwide."*

The music industry has changed considerably in the past few years, with albums largely supplanted by instant downloads of ephemeral and seemingly mass-produced songs. Leonardo is therefore to be applauded for his single-minded effort to bring music with built in artistic integrity, especially from Indonesia, to the wider global market



Riza Arshad (September 2009)

Apart from Anggun, it's not often that an Indonesian group or artist, let alone a progressive jazz group, has an album released on an overseas label. This month sees the international launch of simakDialog's fifth album, *Demimasa*, on MoonJune Records based in New York, who also released their fourth album, *Patahan*.

Leonardo Pavkovic, proprietor of MoonJune, has said, *"I have noticed that Indonesian jazz and prog musicians tend to have smooth jazz affinities: maybe they believe it is a safe way to make the music."*

Speaking of the simakDialog keyboardist and leader/composer, Leonardo says, *"Riza Arshad is an amazing pianist with a great touch and the sensibility of an ECM artist."*

This is the German label which first recorded albums by Pat Metheny and Bill Frisell, and counts Keith Jarrett, Jan Garbarek and Eberhard Weber among its longstanding recording artists.

"I have been talking to Riza to liberate himself and challenge his artistic ego with an evolutionary and free music spirit, without being afraid to say musically what he wants to say. I am asking Riza to abandon the safe way of expressing himself and to experiment more."

In simakDialog Riza Arshad has the solid backing of the ubiquitous guitarist Tohpati with Adhithya Pratama on bass guitar. What adds the extra freer dimension to their music is the percussion triumvirate of Endang Ramdan, Erlan Suwardana and new member Emy Tata on Sundanese kendang percussion, claps, toys, tambourines, and vocals.

Arshad's compositional approach opens up from a jazz-rock palette, but his Fender Rhodes electric piano is clearly influenced by the crisp ring and shimmer of gamelan.



Arshad might begin in a contemplative mood, but it doesn't take him long to develop an insistent pulse. The percussionists soon enter, clattering out their organic patterns with roundly slapped skins, shakers, bells and handclaps. Tohpati is also attracted to resonant treble zones, journeying from acoustic delicacy to a subtly distorted friction. Another element is added later, with the percussionists chanting along to emphasise their dense structures.

The result sounds both natural and fully integrated. This is a particular realm that couldn't be reached either by Western progressive musicians or a traditional gamelan ensemble. simakDialog involves a unique combination of both spheres, without making the commercially tempting mistake of cultural dilution.

Firstly, how come you played in bare feet at Goethe Institute?

That is a traditional dress code, I first played barefoot back in 2002 in a gig by simakDialog's at Philharmonik Petronas' concert hall. I do this to try to catch the 'spirit' of the music. I can't imagine what would be my performance if I should dress any other way.

(Note: this is a practice he has discontinued.)

How did you become a jazz pianist rather than, say, a classical pianist.

I started to play at 6: classical music was the 'tool' for my first encounter with the piano. I found it difficult to concentrate as I was quite a rebellious kind of boy. I liked watching fish - this was so distracting.

I quit my course but began to play again at the age of 10, but 'naturally' by copying my early influence of classical music. I created 'original' tunes and began to enjoy the beauty of composing and improvising.

How did your early music develop?

Through my brother, Luke Arsyad. I got a lot of musical knowledge, mainly classical since we shared the same teacher, but also tons of 70's music especially those from art rock/classic rock genre (Yes, Genesis, ELP, Gentle Giant, the Who, Beatles etc.), and some jazz like Corea, Hancock, Davis, but not much.

I took a course of jazz music lessons for two and half years and then my brother asked me to join his art/rock band - Rara Ragadi. I was 15 years old at that time.

Through a friend, we were introduced to the guys in an Indonesian top rock band - God Bless (who have recently reformed) - and through them we were introduced to a local record label guy named Slamet, the CEO of Duba Records. We recorded an album in 1978 which was released in 1979. The band only did a few shows as my brother and I started to work with another rock band - Godspell.

My brother moved to the US to pursue his studies and I enrolled in the art department of the Bandung Institute of Technology and joined the jazz community there and played some gigs. In 1983 I met my next jazz piano instructor to continue to study jazz music. After 8 months, I started another class of jazz studies, this time in Jakarta, so I had to travel back and forth between Bandung and Jakarta every week.

What was the influence on you of the first generation of Indonesian jazzers such as Jack Lesmana, Bill Saragih and Bubi Chen?

Huge: I went to their shows quite a lot and had the opportunity to play with them years later. Being able to play and hang with them was such a milestone in my musical career. I studied with Jack Lesmana and his son Indra and worked as their assistant in their school until it closed in December 1989.

Jack is famous for what he did to introduce jazz rock music in the early 70's in Jakarta. He sort of did what Miles (Davis) had done with jazz in the late 60's, being a huge influence on the later development of jazz and the music industry in this country.

Indra, incidentally, was a remarkable young jazz player, hailed by Leonard Feather, Downbeat magazine and Chick Corea for his amazing talent and he recorded a jazz album with Charlie Haden & Jack deJohnette at the age of 18.

As I became his student then good friends, at one point joining his band 'Reborn', his playing and ideas never let me down. His spirit inspires almost every jazz musician of my generation and the next and I have adopted his philosophy. Having determined my musical direction I have never taken the opportunity to become a good session player, as Tohpati has done.

When did you start recording your own music?

After a period producing indie artists with my brother, including my first solo album in 1992, I formed my original band Dialogue with long time cohorts - drummer Arie Ayunir and Dewa Budjana.

In December 1992 I changed the personnel of my original band and its name

to 'simakDialog'. With my experience working and producing artists with my brother I started to build a sense of my musical identity. Playing in an entirely western mode was no longer a challenge to me, which is why I like to have a specific sound and colour in my music.

Although my brother passed away in 1997, I continue his exploration and dream of making our music widely heard everywhere anywhere in the globe.

Which western jazz pianists do you feel have influenced you the most?

Hmm, difficult question, since every great player who I listen to is my number one star.

My most influential jazz pianists would be Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, Thelonious Monk, Chick Corea, Marc Copeland, John Taylor and Lyle Mays, but it's difficult to choose because I like players who also compose.

Both aspects have a very important impact in developing my musical path. So, apart from those already named, other musical influences are Chopin, Debussy, Jan Garbarek, Coltrane or Ornette Coleman, Charlie Haden, I Wayan Sadre, a traditional/contemporary composer, Jack deJohnette, Alan Holdsworth, Bill Frisell, Terje Rypdal, Pat Metheny or any great rock guitarist.

Where do see your own musical direction heading?

My first priority is still with simakDialog. Other than that, taking Serambi Jazz as an example, my efforts are devoted for the growth of jazz in Indonesia.

You are the curator of Serambi Jazz at Goethe Haus. How did that come about?

They often invited me to play at their jazz events, but I couldn't always be available for them. Plus, I didn't think it would be good to feature me all the time. So, I offered them a new concept: a jazz concert every two months, featuring loads of talented musicians that have always dedicated their lives to music.

The chairman of Goethe Haus is a big music fan and he agreed right away and asked me to find the musicians

I don't want to dominate the Indonesian jazz scene by holding this event too often. I would love it if Indonesians could have a lot of variation in what they can see.

We want to complement other jazz events, such as JakJazz, Java Jazz or the many smaller jazz events held regularly, such as Komunitas Jajan Jazz, KlabJazz's Jazz Break Revival in Bandung, and so on. The more the merrier. We can see the development of Indonesia's jazz community through these many events.

How do you select the musicians featured at Serambi Jazz?

I decide based on who they are as musicians. They should be dedicated to Indonesian jazz development, in other words, someone who has decided to live their life as a jazz musician. I have a list of musicians who are very talented, but

not yet widely known. Through Serambi Jazz events we hope we can introduce them so they get more appreciation.

Which Indonesian musicians, jazz or any genre, are doing things you find interesting?

I rarely listen to a particular music or stay focussed on a certain style or player but listen to anything good for my ears and heart.

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Reza Ryan of IKYWMC (October 2013)

Just occasionally an album arrives in Jakartass Towers which is so unexpected in musical terms that further exploration of the *who*, *why* and *how* is called for.

I Know You Well Miss Clara (IKYWMC) is a four-piece jazz-rock group from Yogya whose first album, *Chapter One*, has recently been released on the New York label MoonJune run by Leonardo Pavkovic. I profiled him in this column last November because of his keen interest in and promotion of the Indonesian jazz-rock scene with a number of releases by simakDialog, Tohpati's Ethnomission, Ligo and Dewa Budjana.

And now comes IKYWMC whose four musicians are graduates of Yogya ISI (Institute of Arts) and what they've produced owes little to anything previously heard in Indonesia or indeed elsewhere. Reza Ryan (32), the guitarist and main songwriter, describes their music as "*progressive/ Canterbury/ classic-fusion*." That is a fair summation, yet, as Leonardo says, "*Their influences are unmistakable, but the end result is completely and uniquely their own.*"



Enriko

Adi

Akbar

Reza

The facility with which Adi Wijaya (26) on keyboards, bassist Enriko Gultom (33), drummer Alfiah Akbar (31) and Reza change time signatures and offer calmness and a roller-coaster ride within one track is evidence of truly telepathic playing and a rare mutuality of musical vision.

Chapter One is a mature and astonishing debut which repays regular listening. In displaying a 'can do, why not' attitude, the group has a refreshing curiosity which augurs well for *Chapter Two* and beyond.

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When did you become interested in making music?

I've never been interested in 'school' things but I remember that what I liked to do in elementary school was imitate the sound of drums using my desk. Then, when I was 10, my uncle taught me the guitar. After that, I played the guitar all the time and when my playing got better than my uncle's, I learned by myself, through cassettes borrowed from my father and my uncles.

What did you listen to at home when growing up?

My mother listened to dangdut and old Indonesian pop songs, and my father liked the Beatles and ABBA. However, my uncles listened to groups like Sepultura and some Indonesian rock bands of the '80s and early 90's such as KLA Project, Power Metal, and God Bless.

Can you tell me about your studies at Yogya ISI (Institute of Arts)?

At that time I was in a period of saturation in music generally. I felt that I needed something new, but couldn't find it until a friend played me a classical guitar piece. I don't remember but I think it may have been by Giuliani. I just felt connected and I wanted to play music like his.

So I decided to learn music from its basics and to study classical guitar at ISI, where Royke Bobby Koapaha and Andre Indrawan were my tutors. But over time I got bored again just playing classical guitar. Although I thought it was cool playing written notations from great world composers, I thought it would be more cool if I was the one who wrote the compositions.

Then I watched a show on my campus by Dutch free jazzers Duo Geizzer Mazolla and jazz music began to steal my attention. At that time the internet was not as prevalent as it is now, but I knew someone who could provide all the albums I wanted. I looked for old jazz recordings from Wes Montgomery, Charlie Parker, Pat Martino, etc. I also bought cassettes of Soft Machine, the Mahavishnu Orchestra, and Miles Davis, and I started listening to Allan Holdsworth, Henry Cow, Frank Zappa and John Zorn.

And so that brings us to IKYWMC?

My classical guitar mentor Royke B Koapaha asked me to join his prog-rock band SAdA, all music teachers at ISI apart from me. We performed at several festivals in Bandung, Surabaya and Yogyakarta. But later, with SAdA not really active I started IKYWMC.

What binds you together and how do you all spend your time away from IKYWMC?

We all have different tastes in music. I mainly love 70's British progressive music and psychedelic rock such as Jimi Hendrix, post-bop era jazz such as John Coltrane ... ah, my music orientation continues to change! I still play with SAdA and also in other settings

Enriko is into 90's grunge and punk, but he also loves avant-garde classical music. He scores movies and is also studying *karawitan* (traditional music) at ISI. Adi likes traditional jazz and classical music, and plays piano in the Yogya ISI Symphony Orchestra.

Alfiah loves punk bands, but also listens to a lot of fusion, and is a drums teacher at a music school in Jogja.

But what binds us together is jazz, and that is the attitude we bring to IKYWMC.

Which musicians do you dream of playing with?

Jack DeJohnette and Miroslav Vitous or maybe Terry Bozzio and Jimmy Johnson. Also, I'd like a duo with British percussionist Evelyn Glennie.

Footnote.

IKYWMC may have played their last gig. Reza has moved to Jakarta to seek wider opportunities. Enriko left the group a couple of years ago and is focused on avant-garde ethno-classical music, largely improvisational. Adi works in a tri setting, and Alfi's main music outlet is a pop group. Hopes for a *Chapter Two* are low.

In November 2013 I was invited to a 'secret' gig at Goethe Haus featuring two of my favourite Indonesian jazz groups, simakDialog and the Dewa Budjana Band. Dewa's band had a familiar line up with one notable difference: a young woman in Dewa's band was playing a zither type instrument which I didn't recognise. After the gig, I asked her about it and she told me that it was a guzheng.

Since introducing ourselves, Fransisca Agustin (stage name: Sisca Guzheng Harp) and I have had a series of email conversations.



Sisca Guzheng Harp (January 2014)

What's your musical education?

I got to love music because I spent the first 12 years of my life sharing the same bedroom with my parents (eekkk!), and my dad would turn his cassette player on. Too bad, what he played was not 'sophisticated music';

he loves pop oldies, the 'sweet memories, evergreen' kind of albums most Asians love. I often wish he had listened to Ravi Shankar, the Beatles or Al Jarreau instead, so I wouldn't have to struggle so hard now, trying to pick up such chords and notes.

I don't have any qualifications as such. I studied classical piano for 8 years from grade 6, and I was far from special: my progress was slow. Later, when I'd finished the high school national tests, I had too much time on my hands. I went to a music school near here and planned to pick up a new instrument. They had the usual classes - piano, guitar, violin, clarinet - but then the headmaster mentioned Chinese instruments

Was your choice of instruments made because you're Chinese-Indonesian or was it perhaps a form of 'rebellion'?

Wow, I do toy with that idea! My parents hoped they would have a nice, obedient daughter, but they made a big mistake. They gave me the 'wrong' name: Fransisca which in Italian means 'a free one'. And Mom gave birth on the wrong day: August 17th. (*Indonesia's Independence Day*)

Consider yourself lucky: no doubt there was a street party in your honour.

Actually I had to go to school on that day, because we had the flag-raising ceremony and I love Independence Day games. At high school, I was *balap karung* (sack race) champ! Haha... I

What are your usual gigs?

On average, I play around 4-7 gigs a month. Usually I play for weddings, gatherings, product launches, those sort of things. The concept is about the same. Sometimes I don't know who I'm going to play with or what we're going to play. The band leader or event organizer just tells me the where and when, then we just 'trust' each other.

One time I played at a well-off family's residence in Jakarta. I was told it was a birthday party, but the atmosphere was really melancholic. Then the elderly birthday man came in an ambulance, oxygen tubes and all.



It turned out that his family had asked for a special day off for him so they could celebrate his "last birthday party".

We played the usual evergreen Chinese pop tunes in the living room while

he stayed in a room next to us. Guests went to his room and everyone came out crying.

Two weeks later the event organizer called, asking if I would play at his funeral. They said he had heard me playing from the next room and his final wish to his family was that I should play solo at his funeral. So I went to the funeral home and played next to his casket ...

As well as guzheng, your stage name includes 'harp'. Do you play other instruments?

My guzheng skill and touch is far above my harp skill, since I started 6 years earlier, and I also had more guzheng jobs for the first 8 years of my career. But I charge more for harp shows because it doubles as a nice decoration. For job shows, I sometimes play *hulusi* (bamboo gourd flute), piano, in hotel lobbies, and, although rarely, accordion.

How do you choose which instruments to play?

I pick those with a 'piano logic', which means one string-button-hole for one note, vertical or horizontal.

Was it a big jump playing with Dewa?

It wasn't easy keeping up with his chord progression, modulations, speed, volume, with an acoustic pentatonic instrument. I had to be really creative to find which bars I could play, and if I couldn't, what to play instead. So I survived with the only weapon I have: dynamic mood synchronization.

That's an interesting phrase, and sums up the essence of jazz. From a YouTube* of you playing with Mukti-Mukti, it seems to me that you bring that quality to all your music.

No-one plays quite like Mukti-Mukti; he has extraordinary and consistent emotional intensity. He showed me how to produce the best sound, the notes that go straight from my heart to others, however limited our skill is.

*Watch: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrP84bqkmSo>

What's next in your musical development?

One day I hope I can be a group leader, perhaps even a composer. I'm not even familiar with jazz chords, not to mention world ethnic music scales, chords, 'accents', licks. There's so much to learn in one lifetime!!

Dewa put me in touch with Tony Prabowo, who's currently writing a complex opera score. I'm studying composition with him and hope we'll make a fresh hybrid together, something difficult to define.

I haven't even started with fingering techniques of all my instruments. I should not pick up new instruments because I'm far from mastering any of them. But for making a living, it can be really tempting because in today's music business, visual entertainment comes before audio.

Finally, what does music mean to you?

When I listen to music and especially play with a great team I see the world through rose coloured glasses. It's like living in an emotionally beautiful video clip.

Of course, over time my 'tastes' demand more variation in terms of skill, genre and players. So I keep looking for ways to experience the rose coloured life. I may be addicted to it.

Tesla Manaf Effendi (November 2014)

I haven't asked Tesla why his parents gave him that name, but it fits the latest guitarist to have an international release of his music on MoonJune Records.

Was he named after Nikola Tesla, "the greatest geek who ever lived"? A geek is someone who obsesses and Nikola's brainwork gave the world alternating current electricity, radio, radar, X-rays, wireless communications, hydro- electricity, and the modern electric motor. That his patents were taken by Thomas Edison and Guglielmo Marconi who got immensely rich while Tesla himself died in poverty is historical fact.

One's first impression when meeting Tesla Manaf is of a young boyish imp, forever jumping around flashing two finger salutes - for victory or Jokowi, I'm not sure - with a wide captivating grin. Yet that belies a complex character, someone driven to achieve what he sets his mind to. As he openly admits, he has Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

Recently turned 27, Tesla says he has been obsessed with music since he was five. His father's choice of music was progressive jazz-rock. complex, richly detailed music from the likes of John McLaughlin's Mahavisnu Orchestra, Gentle Giant, Emerson Lake & Palmer (ELP) and Soft Machine.

At nine, he took up the guitar and piano, and for the next ten years focussed on classical music. However, in 2007, the genre's patterns and rules frustrated him and he began to explore the many traditional music forms in the nation's archipelago and the world of jazz, a language of self-expression.

Much as one cannot write unless one reads widely, a jazz musician does not arrive fully formed. The genre has a history here in Indonesia, and there are few jazz musicians who in the past thirty years would not cite John McLaughlin and Pat Metheny as being major influences

Tesla does: "*Metheny inspired me. He influenced me in many ways, both in his music and the way he spoke and thought. However, back in 2011, I was frustrated at being labelled as 'Indonesia's Pat Metheny'.*

Don't take this the wrong way; I still love Metheny, and my favourite album is The Way Up. But just because I was using his Ibanez Pat Metheny series guitar, which I've now sold, doesn't mean I played like him.

"I have my own sound, and that's what I'm trying to tell audiences. I am who I am, now. A person who plays his own music."



Back in 2011, he released *It's All Yours*, which featured Mahagotra Ganesha, a Balinese art unit of the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB). This self-produced and distributed album proved to be his most successful. 'Gamelan meets Pat Metheny' is a simplistic description given the many twists and turns, the melodies supplied by a 'regular' group of guitar, drums, bass and soprano sax sliding across the gamelan providing rhythmic power. Tesla says that the music tells the story about humanity's connection with nature.

That is important to him. Having been raised in Bekasi, the city on the eastern border of Jakarta, he moved seven years ago to the Dago mountain area of Bandung. He says that "living here makes me aware of the beauty of nature; the way it talks is the most inspiring of God's messages."

It's All Yours has been re-released this year on the Demajors label. It will also be half of his upcoming international release on the MoonJune label. Much of the work he put into creating the soundscape of that project came from his study of such classical composers as Debussy, Bela Bartok and Krzysztof Penderecki.

He has now taken that process a step further with *A Man's Relationship With His Fragile Area*, the other half of the album.

"It affected me a lot; especially the details. Precision and symmetry are a very important beginning to my own music. I often analyse the notes, rhythms, and the drama of each song. I like to create music which will take people into various kinds of emotions, playing with their hearts and minds at the same time. The same goes with my players. Their personalities, the way they play, how they communicate and how they speak ... bringing the best out of them has a good effect on my music."

At a recent showcase of the album in the Rolling Stone Café in Kemang, Jakarta's enclave of the wealthy, I noted the following about *The Sweetest Horn* from the album: *it opened with a whistleable marching band nursery melody played on descant recorder with a drum beat, joined by skittering drums, then guitar and clarinet playing as children do, until they combined to build an echo of an express train which gradually comes towards a halt: a guitar lead pastoral theme takes over, but with underlying menace from the bass*

This is music which repays relistening; each track, a neo-classical experiment, may confuse at first, but as it gradually comes into focus sense is made.

"Honestly," says Tesla, "*I do not know where my music will bring me to. I just keep creating, keep playing, keep inspiring my listeners. It may be a cliché, but I just love what I do and I will stand by it till the day I die.*"

He's a man driven by his obsession, a geek maybe, yet not only at one with himself and his muse, but also at one with nature.

You can see for yourself if you keep an eye out for the butterflies which fluttered by in the recording of this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewA3PZshAqA> (at 5:15).

It was a gift from God, he told me.

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9 June 2016