

# HARMONY BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY IMAGE IN THE PAVILION OF INDONESIA AT WORLD EXPO IN THE PERIOD OF THE NEW ORDER

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## ABSTRACT

Under the New Order regime the participation of Indonesia in World Expo started in the 1970 World Expo in Osaka, Japan. This World Expo event, for the New Order regime, served both as a place and media, which was considered proper and suitable to showcase the positive image of Indonesia in front of the international audience. This research attempts to analyse how the New Order's positive image was presented at the pavilion of Indonesia in the World Expo. This is a cultural study that uses qualitative approach and the analysis is done using data taken from various documents such as photographs, written reports from the organizing committee, news in the newspapers, magazines and Internet. This descriptive analysis reveals that the New Order regime always used the same method in selecting and presenting the pavilions, which is showed in the connection between the nation's greatness and its cultural tradition from the past with its preserved today's tradition, and with the achievements of the national development. The image that the New Order regime wanted to introduce was the harmony between Indonesia's traditional and modern aspects, harmony between tradition and modernity.

**Keywords:** World Expo, New Order, Exhibition, Image, Harmony.

## INTRODUCTION:

World Expo has been used for a number of objectives. It serves as a place where cultural exchanges take place and findings of cutting edge technology for the advancement are displayed. It also represents the national identity of a nation and at the same time strengthens awareness to find solution for universal issues. The New Order regime made strategic policies relating to tourism development and its improvement. They actively worked on cultural mission to foreign countries and international exhibitions such as the World Expo. This regime also took serious measures to shape and improve Indonesia's positive image based on their achievements in the nation's development measures. Referring to the Garis Besar Haluan Negara (GBHN) 'Guidelines of the State Policy' concerning international communication, the New Order stated, "international communication aims at improving Indonesia's positive image based on the achievements of the development ... so hopefully it will give positive impact on the significant increase of the development activities..." (bappenas.go.id). The New Order government shaped the image of Indonesia before the international world through the presence of its pavilions in the World Expo. Indonesia's positive image in the eyes of the international world became extremely important for the New Order regime.

Although the organizer of the World Expo always offered different themes for every event to be used by the pavilions to pass on the messages they want to send, plainly, all the pavilions of Indonesia during the New Order regime appeared similar; they all portrayed the face of Indonesia by means of the merging of modern and traditional building, cultural diversity through dances, traditional music, demo of the making of Indonesia's traditional crafts such as making batik, *keris* 'a wavy-bladed kind of dagger', and carving and weaving. In view of that, this research will focus on analysing how the New Order's positive image was presented in the display of the Indonesia's pavilions in World Expo.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

### New Order's Situation:

New Order was a regime that created distinct boundary with the previous regime, the Old Order. A message from President Soeharto on the spirit of the New Order, in a seminar organized by the Indonesian Army taken place in Bandung in August 1966 was as follows: "... New Order will be of more pragmatic and realistic but we will not forget about our idea on the meaning of independence. New Order wants to put the national interest at the forefront by keeping holding on the ideology that totally goes against communism and imperialism. New Order did not go against a strong government and leadership; this is the characteristic that we will use in this transitional period. New Order will implement the principle of democracy in the field of economy. This is meant to reach a fair and prosperous society based on the five principles (Pancasila) and One Supreme God as our moral values." (Knapp, 2007).

The birth of the New Order was interpreted as the starting point to re-arrange the regulations to save the nation. The New Order created a political orientation in the form of order, stability, security and economic development. Development, according to the New Order, can be carried out when all conflicts both in terms of politics and ideology can be avoided and removed.

In its early period, the New Order regime worked on the national development focusing on the agriculture and the industrial supporting the agriculture sector by means of the policy of agricultural modernization, which is by changing the traditional way of farming to modern one. This policy actually follows the development of the world's agricultural technology moving towards industrialization. This regime aimed to lower the dependency of the farmers upon the climate and nature, to increase food productions to meet the needs of the speedy ever-growing needs of the population.

Other kinds of technology that support the agricultural technology was also intensively developed such as transportation and communication as those two technologies relate to the marketing of the agricultural produces. The transportation technology developed by the New Order government can be seen in the government efforts in building PT PAL in Surabaya as the centre for the development of maritime industry in Indonesia and the launching of the fast ship Palindo Jaya 500 in 1995. This regime also built IPTN (Nurtanio Aircraft Industry). IPTN was very popular with its NC-212 aircraft production, Helicopter NBO 105, CN 235 (Tetuko), N-250 (Gatotkaca) and the production of the components for F-16, Boeing 747 and 737. About this transportation technology advancement, Soeharto remarked as follows: "... Republic of Indonesia is the largest archipelagic nation in the world, which should be maintained in one integrated region, one integrated political unity, one integrated economic unity, one integrated cultural unity and one integrated defense and security. For that reason, strategic development measures should be in place so that this nation will not depend upon foreign countries."

(K.H. Ramadhan and G.Dwipayana, 1989).

The highest achievement of the New Order regime in communication technology was the development of satellite named SKSD Palapa. It was Soeharto who named it Palapa; the inspiration came from the history of Majapahit Kingdom where the Palapa Vow uttered by Gadjah Mada. This Vice Regent vowed not to consume the palapa fruit before the unity and integrity of the Majapahit Kingdom came true. Palapa is the symbol of the unity of the Archipelago. (K.H. Ramadhan and G.Dwipayana,1989). SKSD Palapa is a communication satellite system controlled by a communication satellite created by HAC (Hughes Aircraft Company) and Perumtel Indonesia. Palapa Satellite was first built in 1974 and launched in 1976. This Palapa Satellite had made the communication between one area and another area in the Archipelago, between one country to another country, information dissemination through television, internet, facsimile, telephone communication and it also functioned as repeater satellite. This effort to develop communication system technology was also to prove that the New Order regime was moving fast in developing the country.

The years between 1980s and 1990s were the period of the highest achievement of the New Order regime, the peak of the Soeharto domination as president with no political upheaval. During this period the New Order regime had shown a remarkable achievement in all sectors: agriculture, manufacture, export trading and transportation; the things that President Soeharto had planned in the first Repelita (Five-Year Development Program) had all been achieved, which was to make Indonesia a nation of food self-sufficiency in 1984. (Susanto, 2003). Despite all the successes, after 1982, there was a decrease in the income from oil and gas that forced the Government of Indonesia to be more serious in handling its international tourism and make strategic policies relating to the development and tourism improvement. In 1983 President Soeharto even stated that tourism must be intensively promoted, from the seventh to the third best position in terms of the source of the state revenues. (Picard, 2006). With such policy the government started to make serious efforts in promoting Indonesia as a nation with high culture; they actively sent cultural mission overseas and international exhibitions, which one of them was the World Expo. Culture is regarded as an important national asset.

Indonesia is a big community with diverse ethnic groups that unite as one nation with particular territorial area. The concept of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* or 'Unity in Diversity' was made popular by Soekarno, Indonesia's first president, and it was translated by Soeharto's New Order regime as a 'one principle'-politics that put the stress on the homogeneity of the people.

For the government under Soeharto, ethnic diversity was seen as an inhibiting factor to the national unity. As a result, this regime worked hard to have cultural uniformity. The New Order regime referred to the 1945 Constitution that stated that, "...A culture of a nation is the one that grow as the character efforts of the entire Indonesian people. The old, genuine culture is the peaks of all the cultures found all over Indonesia and they are considered as the peaks of the national culture. The culture related-efforts should be directed toward the advancement of civilization, culture and unity and yet not refusing the new materials from foreign culture that can help develop or enrich the nation's own culture, and to elevate the humanity level of the Indonesian people." (Chapter XIII, Article 32).

The culture that the government designed was considered bearing the identity of Indonesia that was based on the regional administration with 27 provinces. The Government reduced the diversity of Indonesia, which was in fact so extensive, complex and multi-dimensional. They simplified the Indonesian culture by only taking some icons of every region, which were considered able to represent the region.

The most obvious example of this physical form of the Indonesian culture introduced by the New Order regime could be seen in Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Beautiful Miniature Park of Indonesia). Regarding the cultural development of Indonesia through Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, Soeharto's comment was as follows: "The Miniature Park is built with its main purpose to have healthy recreational place, a place where education in its wider sense is offered, a place to introduce Indonesia's arts and culture and one of the efforts to develop tourism. All these are part of the huge contribution framework for the development and growth of the nation that are developing its "Five Principles-Pancasila" society.... "If we would like to develop a perfect Indonesian individual, we then need to include cultural aspects. Without them, it would be felt so dry and arid." (K.H. Ramadhan and G.Dwipayana,1989).

In this 150 hectare-wide land, the New Order government made a serious attempt to formulate one Indonesia covering various aspects of culture and daily life. However, such formulation did not include principal aspects such as language, rites, faiths, legal system, economic system, and social order. This formulation included the physical aspects, which appeared lovely and easy to become a spectacle such as traditional houses, traditional clothing, and dances from various areas.

According to Prof. Melani Budianta, Ph.D (interviewed on 5 June 2015, Jakarta, the New Order Government

changed the diversity of Indonesia which should be of extensive, complex and multi-dimensional in nature into a reduced or simplified form by strictly selecting the icons from every region that were considered representable. That was the pluralism they picked (selected pluralism). The New Order Government hoped that the people could accept such thing as pluralism. If another pluralism did occur, then it was prohibited be discussed, and the cultural diversity in terms of differences, the unsynchronized values, were not be discussed either because the government regarded the selected diversity as the representation of harmony.

Different from the image of the New Order domestically which was repressive in managing cultural aspects that puts the stress on the homogeneity of the people on the pretext of a national stability and remove the regional ethnicity, by arranging the representation of every sector/region which is considered able to preserve diversity and unity. In front of the international world this regime would like to convey that the representation of the regional culture was the diversity, which was the cultural wealth of Indonesia.

**The Harmony between Tradition and Modernity in the Pavilions of Indonesia in World Expo**

The harmony between the preserved tradition and modernity, which was an achievement of development that the New Order regime passed on, can be seen in the depiction of the building or exterior and also the displayed objects in the interior.

In terms of the construction, the concept of the harmony between tradition and modernity was manifested in the combination of the decorative elements of traditional artefacts based on the shape and genuine material (wood) with the construction using modern materials and shape called Rigid Frame Fabric Structure, which was a steel or metal frame covered with fabrics or other materials. For example, in the 1985 World Expo the pavilion of Indonesia was a square shaped knockdown module made of iron frame that was prepared by the organizing committee and it was decorated with the ornament of Toraja, which was created using carving technique and traditional materials and colours.



**Fig.1: Decorative elements taken from Toraja were used in the 1985 pavilion of Indonesia**

In the pavilion of 1986 Expo, the Bentar Temple, banners and traditional Balinese kind of banner that were the construction and traditional ritual objects of Bali were also applied in modern construction that was the module prefabricated by the Expo organizer.



**Fig.2: Bentar Temple, banners and Balinese traditional banner in 1986 pavilion of Indonesia**

In the 1988 pavilion construction, the knockdown module in square shape using iron frame with glass prepared by the organizer was merged with a Toraja based decorative element traditional house, which used carving technique and traditional materials and colours. This traditional house was placed above and it cut through the modern construction under it.



**Fig.3: Traditional house of the Toraja – 1988 pavilion of Indonesia**

In the 1982 Expo's pavilion, on top of the circular shape with iron frame knockdown module construction prepared by the organizer there was a traditional house with decorative elements of Toraja, made using carving technique and traditional material and colours. On the wall they used traditional decorative element known as batik and also modern decorative elements. Other than that, on the pavilion's side they built a high viewing tower using the shape of Timor traditional house.



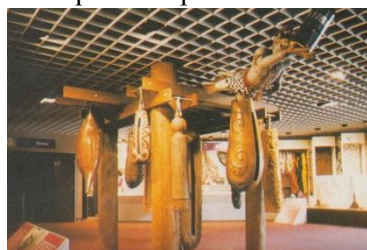
**Fig.4: Traditional house of Toraja and Timor, batik and modern ornaments – 1992 pavilion of Indonesia**

In the 1993 Expo pavilion, in the entrance of the knockdown module construction prepared by the organizer they put a traditional house and ornaments from Minangkabau, West Sumatra, which was built using carving technique and traditional materials and colours.



**Fig.5: Traditional house and ornaments of Minangkabau – 1993 pavilion of Indonesia (expo93.co)**

Looking closely to the displayed objects we can also find the concept of harmony between tradition and modernity that the New Order regime would like to send as their message. In the pavilion in 1986 Expo, there was a model of *kentongan* from regions in Indonesia. *Kentongan* is a village alarm instrument made of bamboo or wood carved into tube shape. This communication instrument was largely used in the past. Traditionally this instrument is used to pass on messages using a particular rhythm that were prefabricated. As traditional model this instrument was displayed with a model of Hanuman character – a character taken from Balinese dance drama that was used to support the Palapa Satellite, a modern communication technology which was a technology the Indonesian people are so proud of. The combination between *kentongan*, Hanoman and Palapa Satellite showed the connectivity between the past and present.



**Fig.6: Kentongan, Hanuman and Palapa Satellite – the 1986 pavilion of Indonesia**

Still in the 1986 Expo's pavilion of Indonesia, we found a diorama displaying the process of the development of Indonesia from traditional society to modern one. This diorama included traditional transportation (horse), crops, *kentongan* and some of the Indonesian people (farmers and women from Papua holding a noken (multi-functional woven craft of the indigenous Papua), industrial workers, heavy machinery, a backdrop of the atmosphere of the physical development process, and also collar workers with a model of an aircraft.



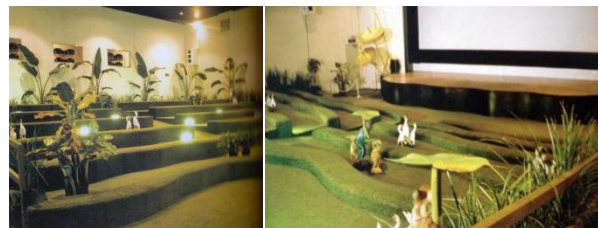
**Fig.7: Diorama in 1986 pavilion of Indonesia**

In the 1988 Expo, the walls in the pavilion of Indonesia were decorated with panels of traditional style-paintings brought in from Kamasan, Bali. These panels took animal and gods as the theme based on Balinese Hinduism, and the influence of the gods to human's daily life, which was painstakingly described in nine panels, totally measured 18 meters long. They also displayed a map of modern Indonesia that was described in a style of Kamasan painting.



**Fig.8. Kamasan-Bali painting style were the decoration of the walls and map of Indonesia for 1988 pavilion of Indonesia**

The stage for performing arts (theatre) used rural-themed decoration that took the form of the typical Balinese terraced rice fields, the arrangement of crafts such as statues of frogs, storks and banana trees produced by the artists from Pengosekan village in Bali. There were also decorative plants like rice and grass carpet which were equipped with stage and audio-visual screen that presented multimedia performances using slides with 36 projectors and also dance performances of various regions of Indonesia.



**Fig.9: Theatre with an interior adopting the shape of terraced rice fields – 1988 pavilion of Indonesia**

In all pavilions there were graphic panels in the form of compilation of photos and audio visual film showing the process and results of Indonesia's development measures such as factories, infrastructure, Palapa Satellite which were placed side by side with the photographs of the artefacts of the past legacy, the cultural products coming from various regions all over today's Indonesia such as dances, music, customs. Other than that, there were also natural wealth, flora and fauna of Indonesia.



**Fig.10: Mosaic of the photos of the 1986, 1988 and 1992 pavilions of Indonesia**

## CONCLUSION:

After closely studying the pavilions of Indonesia in a number of Expos, seemingly the New Order regime would like to show the positive image of Indonesia that was beautiful only in terms of a cultural point of view. The New Order regime did not bring out the cultural comprehensiveness, including the difference in perception and opinion. They only saw the physical aspects such as dances, buildings and traditional clothes. It appears that there was a sort of reduction that make such culture as manageable; it was presented so beautifully, much visited and did not create any problem so that they could become icons that can be enjoyed visually, visited and consumed as a tourism object. Side by side with that such lovely cultural side they also showcased the achievements in physical development and advancement of technology in a way that such accomplishment were to be found anywhere in this archipelago. In the meantime the underdeveloped places that have yet been touched by modernity were hidden from view.

In essence, by means of the pavilions of Indonesia at the World Expo, the New Order regime showcased the

harmony between tradition, regional culture, past culture with that of today's which was the New Order's narrative which departed from pre-modern, tradition, and developed into modernity. However, the tradition was taken and carried, merged with modernity so that it did not losing culture. This is the narrative of the New Order that portrayed the modern Indonesia, and yet still owned its traditional culture.

This New Order narrative was a subtle preservation of the domination despite the fact that it was crystal clear and almost certainly the public were aware of it. According to McLeod (2000), nationalist representation often shows that the sense of equality, sense of nationhood was shaped by the appearance of various narratives, rituals and symbols that will stimulate the sense of individual to become member of particular group. Eric Hobsbawm (2003) shared the same opinion as McLeod; he said that the nation depends on the creation of national tradition, which was formed through repetition of specific symbols and icons. The appearance of national traditions keep the continuity alive between state's present with its past, and helps combine the uniqueness of the shared history and the same origin of the people.

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