The concluding chapter poses the big question in Indonesian politics today: how durable is Indonesia's democracy and which group might bring it down? Davidson singles out Islamic nationalism as the largest threat, largely because it is rooted in ideology. However, this movement would need to form some sort of authoritarian pact with other actors to undo democracy. Davidson considers such a possibility unlikely. Other strategic groups, such as the oligarchs, the military and particularly the political parties, have a lot to lose by yielding to antidemocratic forces.

I think that other factors beyond those mentioned by Davidson may also prevent a durable authoritarian pact from forming. First, the trend of incorporating support for Islam into the platform of nationalist parties may represent a compromise that would satisfy most moderate Muslims. In elections, these nationalist–religious parties have performed much better than the Islamic parties. Second, due to decentralisation, much governance and political competition occur at the local (district) level. Here, elections are largely based on candidates' personalities and patronage rather than on party or ideological cleavages. At this level, national divisions that foster polarisation are less relevant.

Taking a comparative perspective, the book compares Indonesia with its Southeast Asian neighbours, Turkey (the other model of Muslim democracy) and the Arab Spring countries. Compared to these benchmarks, Indonesia stands out as performing admirably in terms of free and fair elections, press freedom and restraints on state-led violence. However, Davidson also highlights the serious contemporary challenges Indonesia faces, and will likely continue to face, during its next 20 years. He describes how state institutions and elections are riddled with corruption and money politics; the slowness of poverty alleviation and job creation efforts; and how growing sectarianism threatens civil rights and minorities.

Overall, Davidson's highly accessible book provides an excellent introduction to the politics and political economy of Indonesia, as well as the key contemporary debates. It is a must read for anyone wanting to understand democratic development in one of the world's largest and most dynamic countries.

COLM FOX
Singapore Management University

Racial science and human diversity in colonial Indonesia
By FENNEKE SYSLING
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In this elegantly written and well-researched book, Fenneke Sysling follows several prominent Dutch physical anthropologists on their many journeys from the Netherlands to the Dutch East Indies. These adventurous men (and a few women) were fascinated by the diversity in appearance of the many ethnic groups of Indonesia, and hoped to travel to remote and isolated areas to find the original and

unadulterated racial types that made up the population of the archipelago. They were convinced that their measurements, photographs, and casts would provide quantitative and objective confirmation of the racial typologies they had already recognised through their trained perceptive capacities — Negroid, Malay, Melanesian, Polynesian, Indo-Aryan, Vedda, Australoid, and so on. Sysling focuses on the often awkward and stilted encounters of these anthropologists with their research subjects, who were understandably reluctant to suffer a range of indignities including posing nude in front of cameras, and having blood samples and various bodily measurements taken. The discomfort associated with having plaster casts taken of their hands, feet, and faces was even worse. Anthropologists frequently had to use connivance, subterfuge, and, at times, force to obtain what they wanted. It was often easier to dig up skulls or whole skeletons from local cemeteries, confiscate cadavers from hospitals, appropriate bodies of executed criminals, or convince local head-hunters to part with their bounty.

In her engaging style, Sysling details the journeys of these Dutch anthropologists to faraway and exotic places. She analyses the auxiliary role of physicians working in the Indies, who, in their spare time, were often prepared to dig up a skull or two to send to the natural history museums in the Netherlands — generally with insufficient documentation, which made their contributions useless. During their scientific expeditions, anthropologists sent vast amounts of material to the Netherlands: skulls, bones, photographs, casts, and enormous amounts of measurements, notes, and observations. They hoped that further analysis of these materials would buttress the science of racial difference, detail patterns of human migration, and determine the origins of the various ethnic groups in the Indies. Sysling points out that the material afterlife of Dutch physical anthropology is still present in Dutch museums, medical schools, and universities in the form of countless human specimens, many of which are still packed in their original boxes. The frantic obsession with collecting Indonesian body parts and transporting them to the Netherlands was hardly ever followed by their investigation after they had arrived. Collecting and transporting skulls and bones for science was, in effect, mostly a symbolic exercise.

In her analysis of Dutch anthropologists in the Dutch East Indies, Sysling discards several explanations that have been provided by historians to explain the activities of physical anthropologists in colonial spaces. In many accounts, physical anthropologists provided eminently useful scientific information on the distinct racial characteristics of various ethnic groups the colonial state relied upon in exerting power. The science of racial diversity made it possible to group highly diverse colonial populations in distinct and mutually exclusive ethnic groups, which thereby became legible and manageable. While they often commended the usefulness of their discipline to the colonial administration — to rule one's subjects, one must know their characteristics, they often argued — most Dutch physical anthropologists admitted that they were not yet in a position to provide anything useful for colonial governance. The anthropologists Sysling studies were rarely able to present clear and convincing results. Even though the various ethnic groups of the Indies appeared, to their highly trained eyes, distinctly different, these initial observations were never confirmed through objective and scientific measurements.

Near the end of the 1930s, the doyen of Dutch anthropology, J.P. Kleiweg de Zwaan, opined that the results of all Dutch anthropological investigations that had thus far been conducted were merely preliminary; only after a great deal more data had been collected could tentative conclusions be drawn. Despite their best efforts, their work had not led to valid conclusions. In this respect, the history of Dutch physical anthropology is tragic. Its protagonists continued to believe that more detailed and new types of measurements, photographs, and plaster casts would eventually result in reliable knowledge about the racial make-up of the Indies. Yet despite their persistent efforts, their discipline never lived up to its many promises. Even the inhabitants of Western Papua, whose characteristics appeared very different than those of the other inhabitants of the Indies, could not be decisively characterised as distinct. Identifying the original racial types of the Timor archipelago, where most ethnic groups appeared to consist of a mixture of various races, was beyond their capacities. The commonsense observations of anthropologists and colonialists of racial difference arguably lacked any scientific foundation.

Despite its lack of definite results, Dutch physical anthropology provided material that was of interest to the general public. Dutch people were fascinated by the many photographs (and the few films) of primitive tribes and flocked to the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam and the National Ethnographic Museum in Leiden to view photographs, objects, and the skulls of these exotic and primitive people, hoping to find out more about Dutch colonial possessions and the origins of humanity. De Zwaan's book on the races of the Indies archipelago, which contained many photographs, remained popular even after the declaration of Indonesian independence on 17 August 1945. It would have been fascinating to learn more about the afterlife of Dutch anthropology in independent Indonesia — was it ignored, or put to new uses?

The interest in racial typology, migration, and the question of human origins motivated Dutch anthropologists to undertake collecting expeditions. This fascination, as Sysling emphasises, still motivates scientists, although these days they tend to rely on DNA analysis rather than skull measurements. By investigating the history of Dutch physical anthropology, Sysling provides many fascinating insights that complement what is already known about the history of this discipline in Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Comparing their theories and approaches with those of other Western anthropologists will provide interesting perspectives on the dynamics of the discipline. Comparing techniques, methodologies, and approaches of non-Dutch anthropologists conducting fieldwork in the Indies, and those of anthropologists working elsewhere in Asia, also promises to provide further insights into the nature of anthropological fieldwork.

HANS POLS
University of Sydney