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INTRODUCTION: (DIS)UNITY IN DIVERSITY: PERSPECTIVES FROM RIAU

Bhinneka tunggal ika 'unity in diversity': the founders of Indonesia—Sukarno and Hatta—had intended to use this national motto as the umbrella that would unify the diverse ethnic groups in the country. Today, fifty-five years later, this umbrella of ethnic unity is not only tattered and torn, but threatening to fall apart altogether. Why is this happening?

In this paper, I argue that current events of separatism and ethnic conflict in Indonesia are not recent occurrences. They are the surfacing of subterranean fault-lines that have long lain beneath the surface of the seemingly unified nation-state. I say 'seemingly unified' because under the two political regimes that have governed Indonesia from 1945 to 1997, 'unification' was achieved through the imposition of order by Jakarta as the centre on the rest of the nation as periphery. The problems lie in this centre-periphery relationship, and not on the periphery alone.

I propose to analyse these centre-periphery problems from the perspectives of my Riau Malay respondents located on one particular periphery—the Riau archipelago in Riau Province, Indonesia.[1] In the first part of this paper, I shall revisit key events in Indonesian national history (1945-1965), relating these to the perspectives and narratives of my respondents. In the second part of this paper, I shall present an ethnographic example of how atavism and indigenism have been symbolically and ritually realised on the ground (1965-1997). In the third part of this paper, I discuss some key developments that have taken in Riau after the fall of Suharto (1997-2001).

[1] My field research in Riau dates from 1979 to the present. The research focussed primarily on the Riau Archipelago (including Bintan, Penyengat, Pangkil, Karas, Galang)—*Riau Kepulauan*—and secondarily on the Sumatran part of Riau province (mainly Pekanbaru)—*Riau Daratan*. As shown below, this distinction is historically and currently relevant. In this paper, the term 'Riau Malays' and 'my respondents' refer to my respondents in the Riau Archipelago. To refer to my respondents in Pekanbaru, I shall describe them as specifically as such.

PART 1: GAPS BETWEEN NATIONAL AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES (1945-1965)

Whose independence? Riau narratives on the period 1945 to 1950

From a Riau Malay perspective, the post-1945 events that my respondents know about—either through first-hand experiences or local narratives—are those that took place in Riau, not Jakarta. In this section, I trace the sequence of events that are mentioned in their narratives, with supplementary information from relevant documentary sources.

According to my respondents' narratives, while Sukarno and Hatta were declaring the existence of a Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta, a group of Riau Malays were seeking to re-establish the Riau sultanate. In my respondents' narratives, there is no mention of the declaration of a Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta.

Ricklefs (1981: 202) offers some corroboration of this situation:

> As news spread of the declaration of independence, many Indonesians far from Jakarta disbelieved it…. It was well into September 1945 before the fact that independence had been declared [on 17 August 1945] was known in remoter regions.

From a Riau Malay perspective, the post-1945 attempt to re-establish the Riau sultanate was the expression of an ambition that had been nurtured ever since the last sultan was forced into abdication by the Dutch colonial government in 1911.[2] Because of this, according to them, when the Second World War broke out, many Riau Malays took the opportunity of joining the Japanese armed forces with the intention of acquiring military experience and a stockpile of arms.

My respondents told me that at that time, the Japanese commander at Tanjungpinang 'had an attitude of sympathy' (*bersikap simpatis*) and formed a battalion consisting of the indigenous inhabitants of Riau. Older respondents who were in this battalion still speak of it with fond memories. Apparently, the officers were mostly aristocrats while the rank-and-file were mostly commoners.

There is some documentary evidence that the Japanese did indeed form native battalions not only in Riau but also elsewhere—for example, in Singapore and the Malay Peninsula. According to Muchtar Lufti *et al* (1977: 419-420), in November 1942, recruits from the native population in the Riau archipelago were sent to Singapore (then known as Syonanto) for military training. On their return, they became *gyu tai*, a Japanese rank that Muchtar Lufti *et al* translated as 'home guard of the islands'. My respondents corroborated this explanation; they added that there was another higher rank for them—*hei ho*, which they translated as meaning 'troops assisting the Japanese'.

[2] In 1911, after the last sultan of Riau was forced into abdication, the Dutch established *Residentie Riouw en Onderhoorgheden* with its capital at Tanjungpinang. (See Wee 1985: 73).

According to Muchtar Lufti *et al*, by 1945 the indigenous battalion in Riau had grown to a strength of some 600 soldiers, all fully armed. My respondents told me that this battalion was known as *Batalyon Kepulauan Riau* 'Battalion of the Riau Archipelago'. It was headed by Raja Muhamad Yunus, who held the rank of major. Evidently, the existence of this indigenous battalion lent some military substance to the hope that the Riau sultanate could be revived.

Riau Malay narratives tell of a five-year struggle which took place from 1945 to 1950. After the end of the Second World War, the Dutch retook the Riau Archipelago, while the Indonesian nationalists were able to extend their influence only up to Sumatra. According to my respondents, those living in Dutch-controlled Riau played both sides of the game—that is, they negotiated with the Dutch for a revival of the sultanate, but at the same time, they were in contact with the Indonesian nationalists in Sumatra. They felt that it was safer for them to hedge their bets, as it was not at all clear at that time which side would win. The upshot was that some of them went to Sumatra to join the Indonesian nationalists, while others went to British-controlled Singapore to organise for the re-establishment of the sultanate. The people in both factions were those who had achieved some military rank under the command of the Japanese.[3]

According to my respondents, for the purpose of re-establishing the Riau sultanate, an organisation was formed in Singapore with the name *Persatuan Melayu Riau Sejati* 'Union of True-born Riau Malays'. They emphasised to me that the term *Melayu Riau Sejati* 'True-born Riau Malays' meant that only people who were truly of Riau Malay origins could join this organisation. This implies the political interference of non-Malay Riau inhabitants at that time.

Indeed, there was a rival Riau group which had been formed by certain people described in the Dutch documents as *niet-Riouwers* 'non-Riau people' (Yong Mun Cheong: personal communication).[4] Apparently, these included Minangkabaus, Javanese and Bataks. The leader of this group was one Iljas, who was a pro-Republican Minangkabau. Their aim was to bring about the inclusion of the Riau Archipelago within the political structure of the Republic of Indonesia. This group formed various interlinked organisations, one of which was the *Badan Kebangsaan Indonesia Riau* 'Organisation of the Indonesian People of Riau'. Perhaps understandably, in the narratives of my Riau Malay respondents, this non-Riau group did not figure at all.

Their narratives focussed much more on the Union of True-born Riau Malays, with considerable detail given. For example, I was told that the Union had set up an office on High Street, a prestigious area at the time, with funds provided by several Chinese merchants who were promised contracts and monopolies after

[3] For other details of this period, see Muchtar Lufti *et al* (1977: 509-534).
[4] Yong Mun Cheong has done extensive research in the Dutch archives on Riau history of this period.

the re-establishment of the sultanate. Even the names of these Chinese merchants are still remembered.

A son of the last sultan of Riau—Tengku Ibrahim (also known as Tengku Besar) was chosen as the sultan-to-be. During the Second World War, he had been appointed *Amir* 'Deputy' of Riau by the Japanese. However, there was dissension about this choice. Major Raja Muhamad Yunus, who had been the Japanese-appointed commander of the Battalion of the Riau Archipelago, was also a contender for the throne. Apart from his own aristocratic descent, his added advantage was his military position, particularly since the indigenous troops still had their arms.

According to my respondents, the faction which favoured Tengku Ibrahim prevailed. Major Raja Muhamad Yunus went to Sumatra with his followers to join a republican group known as the *Persatuan Merah Putih* 'Union of the Red and White', these being the colours of the Indonesian flag. The royalist faction thus lost its military wing.

According to my respondents, the royalists had hopes of reviving the sultanate with the agreement of the Dutch. They said that General van Mook was the Dutch authority with whom the Union of True-born Riau Malays conducted its negotiations.

Schiller (1955: 19-21) confirms that Dr H.J. van Mook, Lieutenant Governor-General, was indeed then in charge of managing some kind of compromise between Indonesian republicanism and Dutch colonialism. In 1946, he proposed:

> A federal Commonwealth of Indonesia, which…would become a member, along with Holland, Curacao and Surinam of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Schiller 1955: 19).

In this scheme, the Republic of Indonesia would be merely one state in the federal Commonwealth of Indonesia with its territory limited only to certain areas of Java and Sumatra. Moreover, the Riau Archipelago would not belong to the Republic of Indonesia.

Indeed, in 1947, the Dutch set up three 'Neo-lands' in the three island groups of Bangka, Billiton and Riau, appointing three local councils to represent their populations. (See Schiller 1955: 111). According to Yong Mun Cheong (personal communication), in the Riau local council, out of the fifteen members, only three were royalists allied to the Union of True-born Malays; the others were from the rival non-Riau group led by Iljas. Royalist hopes of reviving the sultanate with the agreement of the Dutch were thus not at all well substantiated.

On 5 January 1949, the Dutch forces fighting the Indonesian nationalists accepted a call from the United Nations for a ceasefire. (See Ricklefs 1981:

219). Later that year, the Dutch colonialists and the Indonesian nationalists met and agreed on the formation of a *Republic Indonesia Serikat* 'Republic of the United States of Indonesia', which was to be loosely united with the Netherlands, under the Dutch queen as symbolic head (see Ricklefs 1981: 220; Schiller 1955: 337). This 'Republic of the United States of Indonesia' was supposed to consist of seven states (called *negara*), nine autonomous units of lesser status and several minor areas of lower rank (Schiller 1955: 337; <http://rulers.org/indostat.html>). The 'Neo-land' of Riau was to be one of the several minor areas of lower rank.

With this structure agreed upon, the Dutch withdrew. According to my respondents, what happened then was an armed struggle between the forces of *Negara Republik Indonesia* and local forces that wanted to remain autonomous. The name of Major Raja Muhamad Yunus re-surfaces in their narratives at this point as the leader of the Riau forces resisting the advance of *Negara Republik Indonesia*. Eventually, however, the forces of *Negara Republik Indonesia* won. Major Raja Muhamad Yunus escaped and went into exile in Johor in Malaysia where he found safe haven with the Johor Sultan. He gave up his military career, went on the *haj* and became Raja Haji Muhamad Yunus, the Sultan's personal *bomoh* 'traditional healer', with (literally) a telephone hotline to the Sultan. But he remained *persona non grata* in Indonesia, right up to the time of his death in the 1990s.

Negara Republic Indonesia succeeded in annexing all the other 'states', 'constitutional units of lower status' and 'minor areas of lower rank' that had been set up under *Republik Indonesia Serikat* 'Republic of the United States of Indonesia'. The result was the single unified polity of *Republik Indonesia* 'Republic of Indonesia'. Among the very last areas to join *Republik Indonesia* was the 'Neo-land' of Riau, which was incorporated only on 4 April 1950. These last areas to be incorporated came to be known as the 'recovered regions' (*daerah-daerah pulihan*). (See Schiller 1955: 338, 432).

Faultlines in discourses

The local history of post-1945 Riau is not mentioned at all in any of the national histories of the founding of Indonesia.[5] But the official silence does not indicate local amnesia. On the contrary, as shown above, detailed narratives are still being communicated in local discourse. Moreover, these narratives are discussed not just as impersonal chronology, but as personal history, family history, community history, with the characters and events relating directly to oneself, such that the shape of one's own life becomes meaningful in that context.

[5] The only Indonesian-authored history that mentions any of the events mentioned in my respondents' narratives is *Sejarah Riau* 'History of Riau' by Muchtar Lufti *et al* (1977), where all the authors are Riau academics. Because of the significant Riau perspective of this work, extensive reference will be made to it in this paper as a documentary supplement to my respondents' narratives.

The gap between the official silence and one's personal knowledge of the local past forms a fault-line between centre and periphery. This is not just a fault-line of knowledge and articulation, but a fault-line between people—between those who engage in a national discourse at the centre and those who engage in a local discourse at the periphery. This gap is not on level ground. The former are aware of only the official version, whereas the latter are aware of two versions of the past—their own local version and the official version.

This is the logic of power. The powerful centre is conscious only of itself, whereas the powerless periphery is conscious of its own perspective, as well as the perspective of the centre. As a result, the discourse from the periphery is able to assume a dual character with an external meaning that is palatable to the centre and an internal meaning that is known only to those with local knowledge. We shall see below examples of a sustained *double entendre*, where the gap between the two meanings forms a subterranean gap that is visible only to those below and not to those above. Derks (1997), working with Riau Malays in the Sumatran part of the province, provides ample corroborating evidence of such dualistic discourse.

Furthermore, this duality is split along two distinct modes of ideational construction. National history—that is, the official version of the past—is formal, textual, precisely articulated and objectified. In contrast, local history is informal, oral and embedded in personal narratives and everyday social relations. This difference is analogous to the difference that exists between canonical religion and popular religion. This difference is indeed another fault-line that exists between centre and periphery.

The hegemonising intent of the centre to present only one version of the past—*the* national history—is being realised only in the formal sector, in clearly articulated and objectified phenomena, such as history textbooks, national day parades, national museums, national ideology, and so on. Nebulous everyday life tends to elude formal control. This is an important point to note with regards to movements for local autonomy.

Observers are often surprised by the speed with which such movements emerge and grow. Suharto fell from power on 21 May 1998. In the following three short years, in addition to separatist movements that have long existed, notably in East Timor (which has since seceded) Aceh, Ambon and Irian Jaya/Papua, seemingly new movements are springing up with such rapidity all over Indonesia that it has become difficult to keep track of them. One may indeed ask, 'Where were these movements during the 32 years of Suharto's regime?'

The answer, I propose, lies in the social embeddedness of movements for change, particularly in contexts of authoritarian hegemony where alternatives are not allowed to surface. The dictionary definition of the term 'movement' suggests this phased character: '(a)**:** tendency, trend (b)**:** a series of organized

activities working toward an objective' (Merriam-Webster: <www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>).

I argue that prior to the surfacing of a movement in an organised form, it exists below the surface, embedded as a 'tendency, trend' in everyday discourses, relations and practices. Therefore, current events of separatism and ethnic conflict in Indonesia are not really recent occurrences. They are the surfacing of subterranean fault-lines that have long lain beneath the surface of the supposedly unified nation-state. In this paper, I show how this process takes place in Riau.

Silences and articulations in Riau Malay discourse: narratives on the period 1950 – 1965

The said and the unsaid are significant contours of discourse. The contrast between certain silences and articulations is noteworthy in narratives on the period 1950-1965.
The silences in Riau Malay narratives relate not only to events that are geographically distant from Riau—for example, those in Jakarta—but also to certain events that are closer to home.

Historical evidence indicates that in the 1950s, there were two armed rebellions involving Sumatra:

- 1953-1962: Armed revolt broke out in Aceh (at the northern tip of Sumatra) as part of an uprising by *Darul Islam* 'House of Islam', a political movement with the mission of establishing the Islamic State of Indonesia—*Negara Islam Indonesia*. In 1945, towards the end of the Second World War, the Japanese had set up two distinct fighting forces among those seeking an independent Indonesia—*PETA* made up of Javanese *abangan* 'syncretist' soldiers and the *Hizbullah* 'Army of Allah' made up of more strictly Muslim soldiers. In 1949, the Sukarno Government disbanded the *Hizbullah* and demobilised all its military commanders from their posts. After that happened, these ex-*Hizbullah* commanders initiated a series of armed revolts—in South Kalimantan (1950-1959), South Sulawesi (1952-1965) and Aceh (1953-1962). The Aceh revolt was led by Teungku Daud Beureueh, ex-Hizbullah Military Commander of Aceh, Langkat and Karo from 1945 to 1949. (See, for example, 'Teungku Muhammad Daud Beureueh').

- 1956-1961: On 16 December 1956, 48 Army officers from Sumatra signed a manifesto critical of the central government in Jakarta. On 20 December 1956, Colonel Hussein seized administration in Padang (in West Sumatra), while Colonel Simbolon seized administration in Medan (in North Sumatra). On 15 February 1958, the Sumatra rebels set up in Bukittingi (West Sumatra) a rival Government of Indonesia called the *Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia* (PRRI) 'Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia'. This alternative government

had the support of other rebels in Sulawesi and Java, drawn from the Indonesian army and the *Masyumi* umbrella Islamic party. (See '1950 to 1965: the Sukarno years').

The difference between these two revolts is that the former articulated a militant Islam that was located *outside* the recently established Indonesian nation-state, whereas the leadership of the latter emerged out of two key institutions located *within* the Indonesian nation-state—namely, the army and the *Masyumi* party, an umbrella party for all Islamic parties in Indonesia.[6] While the aim of *Darul Islam* was to establish a new Islamic State of Indonesia, the aim of the Sumatra rebellion was to replace the existing government of Indonesia.

The Riau Malays were evidently not part of either struggle. There is no narrative about any Riau personage said to have played a role in these two revolts. Only my respondents in Pekanbaru (on the Sumatran part of Riau Province)[7] mention briefly the *pemberontakan* 'rebellion' of 1956-1961, which they perceive as a rebellion of Sumatran colonels, aggrieved at the loss of Sumatra's resources to Jakarta with very little or nothing back in return. But interestingly, in this passing mention, they do not mention the *Masyumi* party at all. Furthermore, no mention whatsoever is made of *Darul Islam* by any of my Riau Malay respondents.

The Riau Malays are predominantly Muslim.[8] Penyengat in the Riau Archipelago was a major Islamic centre in the Malay world, whence Islamic discourses and practices were disseminated to Singapore and the Malay Peninsula. (See Wee 1985). However, the Riau Malays are evidently not participants in the Islamic politics of Indonesia.

For the period 1950 to 1963, in stark contrast to the armed revolts that were breaking out in Sumatra, as mentioned above, my respondents in the Riau Archipelago speak of this period as a time of economic plenty. Why is this so?

As explained by Muchtar Lufti *et al* (1977: 631), from 1950 to 1963, the Riau Archipelago, together with the neighbouring Lingga and Tujuh islands, was made a duty-free zone within the Republic. This was no innovation; it was merely a continuation of Dutch colonial policy when the Riau-Lingga-Tujuh islands were designated *buiten de tolgebied* 'exempt from taxation'. So, as before, imports into the zone were not dutiable; tax was levied only when these imports were brought into other parts of Indonesia. Moreover, the currency in use in this duty-free zone was not the Indonesian *rupiah* but the dollar of British Malaya. My respondents remember this period as a time when imports were cheaper and more accessible to them than they were to other Indonesians.

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[6] The *Masyumi* party had its roots in the earlier pan-archipelago Federation of Islamic Social Organisations—*Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia (MIAI)*—formed in 1937.

[7] As mentioned in Footnote 1 above, there is a distinction between the Malays of the Riau Archipelago and those on the Sumatran part of Riau Province.

[8] A minority of the Riau Malays are tribal animists who do not profess Islam even nominally. For more information about them, see Wee 1985, Chou and Wee 2000.

So even after its incorporation into the Republic of Indonesia, the Riau Archipelago was not fully integrated into the national structure or, for that matter, the provincial structure. Riau Province was bifurcated into a duty-free, trade-oriented archipelagic zone using a non-Indonesian currency and a mainland zone that was more integrated into the Indonesian economy, using an Indonesian currency. Such a situation led to considerable autonomy for the Riau Archipelago, not just economically but also politically. So despite their failure to revive the Riau sultanate, the Riau Malays were not too unhappy with their incorporation into Indonesia under these circumstances. For this reason, there was little motivation for them to participate in the revolts occurring on Sumatra.

However, in 1963, this state of affairs ended. This coincided with the founding of Malaysia (then including Singapore)—an event condemned by Sukarno as 'neo-colonial'. In the first period of nation-building, Sukarno (President from 1945 to 1965) had tried to unify the nation through anti-colonialism. While this did bring about some solidarity in some sectors of the population, especially when the Indonesian armed forces were still fighting the Dutch, right up to 1949. Subsequently, anti-colonialism lost much of its impetus as a unifying force, when the colonial presence faded in Indonesia.

In the 1950s, after the *Darul Islam* rebellion, the Sumatran colonels' rebellion and other rebellions in Indonesia had been quashed by superior military force, Sukarno tried to revive anti-colonialism as a unifying force. This strategy put Indonesia on the political world map (for example, through the historically significant Bandung Conference) and led to a dalliance with the Communists as allies against 'neo-colonialism'. It brought Sukarno into confrontation with 'neo-colonialism', not just in Indonesia but also in other developing regions of the world. It was in this context that Sukarno declared war (which he called *Konfrontasi* 'Confrontation') against the founding of Malaysia as a 'neo-colonial' puppet state, hoping thereby to mobilise Indonesian solidarity in the face of an external enemy.[9]

As a result of *Konfrontasi,* all trade links between Indonesia and Malaysia were severed. As noted by Muchtar Lufti *et al* (1977: 703-705), the Riau Archipelago was the area of Indonesia most severely affected by *Konfrontasi*, because of the total severance of international trade on which the people of the area depended. My respondents said that this led to an increase in smuggling and the growth of the black market.

This Indonesian government banned the use of the British Malayan dollar and the Malaysian dollar, introducing instead a new currency for the area called *Rupiah Kepulauan Riau* 'rupiah of the Riau Archipelago', with the acronym KRRP (that is, standing for Kepulauan Riau Ru-piah). At that time, the market

[9] Malaysia at the time of its formation comprised the Malay Peninsula, Singapore and British North Borneo—then British colonies. Sukarno's argument was that the formation of a nation-state out of these British colonies created a neo-colonial puppet state that was still tied to Britain.

rate of exchange was 1000 ordinary Indonesian rupiah to 3 British Malayan dollars (Rp1000 = BM$3). This also became the designated rate of exchange between the ordinary Indonesian rupiah to the newly introduced KRRP (Rp1000 = KRRP3). (See Muchtar Lufti *et al* 1977: 703-705).

The Riau Archipelago thus became an economically isolated area, cut from international trade, yet also separated from the rest of Indonesia, including the Sumatran part of Riau province which continued to use the ordinary Indonesian rupiah. My respondents remember *Konfrontasi* as a period of economic hardship when even rice was scarce and when the only goods that were available were those that had been smuggled in.

Even more interesting is what some respondents said about their role in *Konfrontasi*. According to them, the Indonesian government had formed a government-in-exile of what they called *Republik Malaya* 'Republic of Malaya', complete with what was supposed to be its own army—*Tentara Nasional Malaya* (TNM) 'National Forces of Malaya'. This supposed Malayan government-in-exile was based in the Riau Archipelago, specifically in Belakang Padang (in the Bulan island-group) and Tanjungbalai (in the Karimun island-group). The TNM had their military training on the island of Batam.

Muchtar Lufti *et al* (1977: 705-706) confirm that Riau did become the Inodnesian military base for confronting Malaysia, with troops occupying the islands and coastal areas nearest to Singapore and Malay Peninsula. As they describe it, 'The Riau area had the atmosphere of being in a state of war, with the inhabitants forced to give provisions to the troops.' According to this source, the majority of the TNM troops were volunteers drawn from the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI or Communist Party of Indonesia). My respondents said that members of the Malayan Communist Party were also involved in the TNM.
Most of the latter were said to have been ethnic Chinese from Singapore and the Malay Peninsula, including some who served as secret agents there.

According to my respondents, several prominent Riau Malay aristocrats were recruited into this government-in-exile, so as to boost its ethnic Malay component, the other members being largely Minangkabau people both from Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. Those of my respondents who were involved in this government-in-exile said that they had little choice but to join when asked to by the Indonesian Government. They said had they refused, they would have been accused of treason. They stressed that they themselves had no sympathies with *Konfrontasi* and were involved in it only because they were forced to serve as token figureheads.

However, they subsequently had a chance of secretly expressing their reluctance. An event narrated from their perspective is the Indonesian Government's invasion of Malaysia by paratroopers landing in Johor. According to my respondents, some of them happened to be put in charge of selecting the paratroopers to be sent to attack Malaysia.

Apparently, they picked all the Javanese names and proceeded to contact the Malaysian government secretly about the time and place of the attack. When I asked them why they did this, they said that they had no reason to help the Javanese to go and kill their relatives in Malaysia, especially in Johor.

Documentary sources indicate that two paratrooper raids did take place unsuccessfully:

> 17 August 1964: Indonesian paratroopers land on the shore of Johore in southern Malaysia. Forty-nine are killed, the rest are captured.
>
> 2 September 1964: A second wave of Indonesian paratroop landings in Johor is equally unsuccessful. All are killed or captured (see, for example, '1950 to 1965: the Sukarno years')..

There is no documentary evidence to corroborate my respondents' account of the failed raids. But whether true or false, their narratives do indicate that their co-optation, on the basis of their Malay ethnicity, into the putative government-in-exile was a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it helped the Indonesian government to claim that this government-in-exile was, to some extent, ethnically Malay and therefore 'representative' of the Malay population of Malaysia. On the other hand, this reinforced the Malay ethnic identity of the Riau Malays and their ethnic relationship to the Malays of the Malay Peninsula.

Faultlines in agendas

The discussion above indicates that there are fault-lines, not just in discourses, but also in political agendas. Broadly speaking, there is a fault-line between the centre and the periphery. However, at least two distinctive types of such fault-lines are discernible in this twenty-year period (1945 to 1965). In this period, the Riau agenda and the Aceh agenda differed from the Jakarta agenda in distinctive ways. To understand this difference, let us compare two historical figures who may be seen as epitomising the political agendas of Riau and Aceh:

- Major Raja Muhammad Yunus, who led the bid in the 1940s to re-establish the Riau sultanate, wanted a Riau kingdom that was separate and distinct from Indonesia. His agenda posed an alternative for Riau, not for Indonesia as a whole.

- Teungku Daud Beureueh, who led the *Darul Islam* revolt in Aceh in the 1950s, wanted an Islamic state of Indonesia. His agenda was not just for Aceh, but for a different kind of Indonesia.

Therefore, although Riau and Aceh are both peripheries in relation to Jakarta, their relationships to the centre differed as a result of their specific political agendas *vis-à-vis* the Indonesian nation-state.

Underlying the Riau agenda for the revival of a Riau kingdom was the historical consciousness of such a kingdom. In the context of my respondents' account,

Johor was mentioned in particular. This is significant because Johor and Riau once belonged to the same Johor-Riau kingdom, from at least the 16th century to the 20th century, a minimum of some 500 years.[10] Indeed, it is Johor that provided a refuge for Major Raja Muhammad Yunus in the 1940s when his bid to revive the Riau sultanate failed.

In my respondents' narrative account of the paratrooper raids, the ethnic identity *Melayu* 'Malay' was meaningful in terms of kinship links to other Malays in Malaysia. This was significantly different from the Indonesian intention of linking 'Malay' identity to the *Republik Malaya* 'Republic of Malaya'—a putative entity for which my respondents did not seem to have felt much allegiance. Thus, even when Malay ethnic identity was foregrounded as a political desideratum during *Konfrontasi*, there was a fault-line between the understanding of the Indonesian government and the understanding of local Riau Malays of what Malay identity and hence allegiance meant.

Furthermore, my respondents feel that historical events justify their erstwhile skepticism of *Konfrontasi*. Sukarno fell from power shortly after the supposed *coup d'etat* attempt of the Communist Party on 30 September 1965.[11] Reprisals were subsequently launched against the Communists. My respondents who were in the Malayan government-in-exile said that when that happened, they were very quick in issuing a public declaration denouncing the Communists for having misled them. They said that others who did not do so immediately were subsequently either imprisoned or executed. As a result, despite having been the military base of *Konfrontasi*, the Riau Archipelago was evidently not regarded as a Communist stronghold by the anti-Communist elements who were now in political and military ascendancy in Indonesia. Consequently, my respondents said, the people of the Riau Archipelago were spared the massacre of Communists that occurred elsewhere in Indonesia.[12]

Fault-lines in agendas thus occur not just between centre and peripheries, but also between different factions at the centre. This raises the possibility of an alignment between the agenda of a periphery with that of a faction at the centre, a possibility that is becoming a reality in post-Suharto Indonesia.

Different agendas imply different frames of reference and different modes of articulation. At the core of the Riau agenda is Riau itself—the territory. A key question implied in this agenda is: who owns Riau? To answer this, temporal frames of reference are used, tracing ownership in ethno-historical terms to earlier kingdoms when the Riau Malays ruled Riau.

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[10] See Andaya (1975), Trocki (1979) and Wee (1985) on the history of Johor-Riau kingdom.

[11] This event is officially referred as *G30S*, an acronym for *Gerakan 30 September* 'Action of 30 September'.

[12] As Ricklefs (1981: 274) describes the situation then:

> From Java and Bali particularly, there came news of mass graves and of streams choked with bodies. No one knows how many died in late 1965 and early 1966, for no one counted. Most scholars accept a figure of 500,000 deaths, but this can only be an estimate.

PART 2: ETHNO-HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND SYMBOLIC REALISATIONS IN RIAU (1965 TO 1997)

Atavistic attempts to recreate bygone sultanates imply a knowledge of the past. Such knowledge is rooted in ethno-historical constructions as the intellectual foundations of atavistic movements. These constructions exist in multiple forms—as verbal narratives, documentary records, genealogies, myths, material representations, sacred sites, rituals, social institutions, interactional patterns, and so on. The ethno-historical constructions of the past are thus articulated and embedded in the everyday life of the present. As a result, such constructions have the power of creating a constituency of insiders loyal to the atavistic vision but detached and even cynical about the mundane world outside.

Under Suharto's *Orde Baru* 'New Order' (1966-1997), the overt rebellions of the Sukarno years were no longer feasible. During this period, many prominent Riau Malays adopted a strategy of cultural revitalisation, under the banner of Indonesia's *bhinneka tunggal ika* 'unity in diversity'. The cultural revitalisation movement was able to utilise government funds for such activities as:

—to restore historical graves, palace ruins and other archaeological sites
—to establish cultural centres
—to conduct research on language and literature
—to organise seminars and conferences

Most importantly, the cultural revitalisation movement sustained the idea of the Riau Sultanate as a *cultural* reality within a temporal past-in-the-present. This further legitimated the everyday practice of customs and rituals derived from the time of the Sultanate. In the context of the political changes in post-Suharto Indonesia, this period of cultural revitalisation may be seen as a staging phase for the more politicised phase that currently exists.

Symbolic ownership of Riau: the ethno-historical and ritual significance of Raja Hamidah's grave

In this paper, I will give just one ethnographic example of how an ethno-historical construction is expressed within the frame of a temporal past-in- the-present, thereby preserving the sultanate as a cultural reality with the potential of becoming a political reality. I will do this by analysing one particular grave in Riau as an ethno-historical construction that embodies layers of meaning and possibility—namely, the grave of the Princess, Raja Hamidah (?-1884), on the island of Penyengat.

I myself first heard of this grave not from my Riau Malay respondents, but from the Indonesian bureaucrat in the district capital, Tanjungpinang, who was processing my research visa in 1979. When this (Javanese) bureaucrat learnt that my intention was to do field research on Riau Malay culture and society, he immediately told me that I had to visit the grave of Raja Hamidah on Penyengat.

When I asked why, he said that all newcomers who come to work in Riau—including himself—must pay their respects at this grave. They should also throw one gram of gold into the sea at a particular spot not far from her grave. This is to ensure that the 'fruits of their labour' (*hasil-hasil*) can be taken out of Riau when they leave at the end of their period of work. He advised me to do the same as I had come to work in Riau and I would want to be able to take the results of my work with me when I leave. He then regaled me with stories about people who had failed to do that—how the ships bringing their goods sink in the sea, causing them to lose the wealth they had gained in Riau.

It was clear that the grave of Raja Hamidah was a very meaningful and powerful symbol even to outsiders such as this Indonesian bureaucrat from Jakarta, inducing them to take the trouble of visiting the island of Penyengat at least once during their tour of duty, paying their respects at a Riau Malay grave, throwing away of one gram of gold into the sea—all of which may be understood as ritual sacrificial acts, since the purpose is to ensure that they can then take away the wealth they earn in Riau, which is thereby seen in some sense as 'belonging' to Raja Hamidah.

What then is so special about Raja Hamidah's grave? Even the most casual tourist visiting Penyengat will notice that this grave, because it is housed within an elaborate, yellow mausoleum with Chinese-style architecture and a walled garden. Within the mausoleum, there are several graves. But Raja Hamidah's grave stands out because it is located in an inner sanctum and is the largest grave there with a canopy over it hanging from the ceiling. On her grave is a prominent sign that describes her as *Pemegang Regalia Kerajaan* (Guardian of the Royal Regalia). Next to her grave is another grave that is said to belong to the mother of Tengku Husain Long of Singapore.

A thick cluster of narratives is required to understand all these highly visible signifiers surrounding the grave—the mausoleum, the yellow colour, the canopy, the inner sanctum, the meaning of the words on the sign, the accompanying grave, and so on. A mere visit to the grave would suffice to stimulate curiosity about the whys and wherefores of this grave. Therefore, if an Indonesian bureaucrat were to come to this grave for the most mechanistically ritual purpose of guaranteeing his wealth, he is very likely to be exposed to the cluster of narratives that explain this grave and thereby why he has to undergo this ritual.

According to indigenous narratives, this is the grave of Raja Hamidah, primary wife of Sultan Mahmud Shah. When the sultan married her, he bestowed on her a lavish bridewealth (*mas kawin*)—the island of Penyengat as the capital of future Viceroys (*Yang Dipertuan Muda*). Raja Hamidah was herself the daughter of the last Viceroy, Raja Haji, whose grave is also on Penyengat and, significantly, on a hill overlooking the spot where newcomers are supposed to throw a gram of gold into the sea. After her marriage to the sultan, Raja Hamidah's brothers became Viceroys in succession and subsequently her nephews and other male collaterals. Prior to the bestowal of Penyengat on Raja

Hamidah as bridewealth, Penyengat was just an ordinary island with fishing villages. After the royal marriage, it became a royal island, the capital of the Viceroys and the home of their descendants. The Viceroys governed the Riau sultanate on behalf of the Sultan. Penyengat was their capital and to this day, is regarded as belonging to Raja Hamidah. It is this cluster of narratives that explains the logic of newcomers having to come to this grave to pay their respects to Raja Hamidah so that they are 'allowed' to take away the wealth of Riau that they should earn.

Furthermore, a symbolic context is created in ritual visits to the grave. Muslims visiting any grave have to first undergo ritual purification (i.e. wash themselves in preparation for prayer), wear proper clothes for prayer (including headgear), bring flowers, water and white cloth to the grave, and at the grave site, sit down and recite the appropriate prayers there. Most of such ritual visits are usually to the graves of family members. In most cases, ritual visits are extended to graves of non-family members, only when these graves are regarded as 'blessed' (*berkat*) because they house individuals who have been blessed with special powers. Such graves are therefore known as *keramat* 'charismatic graves'. Raja Hamidah's grave is a *keramat.* It is therefore particularly significant that even Indonesian bureaucrats willingly participate in the creation of a temporal context focussed on this particular *keramat* grave. Knowingly or unknowingly, their participation signifies, at least to the Riau Malays, if not to the bureaucrats themselves, the continuity of the bygone Riau sultanate as a powerful reality in the present. It is this and other such ways that ethno-historical constructions are made real in an everyday experiential sense.

The Indonesian bureaucrats' acknowledgement of the symbolic ownership of Riau by Raja Hamidah is particularly significant in a context where there is not very much that local Riau Malays can do in terms of the wealth acquired from Riau by outsiders. In the absence of any real political power, therefore, symbolic power is even more important, because that is all they have.

The cluster of indigenous narratives surrounding Raja Hamidah's grave refer not only to power—that is, in terms of the ownership of Penyengat and therefore Riau. These narratives also refer to loss—that is, what was rightfully owned and then was lost. The narratives referring to loss are signified by the sign on the grave that describes her as *Pemegang Regalia Kerajaan* (Guardian of the Royal Regalia). According to these narratives, her husband Sultan Mahmud Shah had appointed her as the Guardian of the Royal Regalia. This indicates her powerful position, for it is these regalia that would bestow legitimacy on the next sultan. Raja Hamidah was childless but among the secondary wives, there were two with sons who were eligible for the throne. The older one was Tengku Husain Long, the younger one was Tengku Abdul Rahman. Upon their father's death, both wanted to be king and were supported by different factions:

- Tengku Husain Long was supported by the *Temenggung* (Minister of Territories) and the English East India Company.

- Tengku Abdul Rahman was supported by the *Yamtuan Muda* (Viceroy) and the Dutch East Indies Company.

To secure political advantage, Tengku Husain Long and his faction set out to establish a new capital at the southern end of the Melaka Straits, thereby effectively controlling the shipping trade plying between the Straits and the South China Sea. Two islands in particular were considered—Karimun and Singapore. (See Map 1.) In the end, they chose Singapore because of its historical association with the old kingdom of Temasik, from which came the Sultanate of Melaka and subsequently, Johor and Riau.

Raja Hamidah favoured Tengku Husain Long as the new sultan. Upon receiving word that the new capital was to be in Singapore, she prepared to set sail from Penyengat with the royal regalia to crown him as the legitimate king. But the faction supporting the younger prince, Tengku Abdul Rahman, forced her off the boat and prevented her from making the journey. That night, Dutch soldiers marched into her house and seized the royal regalia. Due to this act of treachery, Tengku Husain Long was not crowned legally as the next sultan and Singapore did not become the next capital of Riau.

It is in this narrative context that Raja Hamidah's grave articulates the loss of Singapore and the dismemberment of the Riau Kingdom. The indigenous narrative given above relates, of course, to the well-documented event of the so-called 'founding' of Singapore in 1819. But it is quite clear that this is a very different perspective from the colonial description of Stamford Raffles 'founding' Singapore as a British colony (which is the version that currently circulates as the dominant narrative in the Republic of Singapore). So from this indigenous perspective, the failure to crown Tengku Husain Long with the royal regalia is seen as pivotal to the loss of Singapore. As a mere pretender and not a legitimate king, he had no power to stop the British from annexing Singapore as a British colony.[13]

We now see why the grave of Tengku Husain's mother came to be located next to Raja Hamidah's grave and why 180 years after the event, Raja Hamidah is singularly remembered as the Guardian of the Royal Regalia. As for the Chinese-style architecture, my respondents say that Raja Hamidah had a faithful Chinese subject—a merchant—who expressed his loyalty to her by building the mausoleum that houses her grave. Does this not say something about Malay-Chinese relations in a context where Singapore has become a Chinese-dominated state? It should be noted that this mausoleum is the only Chinese-style building on the completely Malay-Muslim island of Penyengat, so its architectural style is not accidental.

This message of loss, located in the past of the 19th century, but still remembered and articulated in the present, reminds those who are in the know of another unspoken loss—namely, the loss of the sultanate within Riau today.

[13] For more information on these events, see Winstedt (1979), Wee (1985).

The conservation of Raja Hamidah's grave within this cluster of indigenous narratives is therefore also the conservation of these messages of power and loss.

From ethno-history to atavism: a process of politicisation

Ethno-historical constructions can be alternately:

- indigenous interpretations of past events
- mythical expressions of symbolic meaning
- statements of political intent
- charters for political action

But they do not have to be all these; they can indeed just be indigenous interpretations and mythical expressions without necessarily being political statements and charters for action. These ethno-historical constructions can remain simply as a cultural exercise, without any further political implications.

The question is: when do ethno-historical constructions become politicised and why? I would argue that such constructions become politically potent when they are used as legitimating ideologies for the control of contested resources and territories. I use the term 'atavism' to refer to politicised ethno-history.

The dictionary definition of 'atavism' is 'reversion to a past style, manner, outlook, or approach' (Merriam-Webster: <www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>). However, I argue that in this context of discussion, such reversion is politically motivated. This is more than just the memory of past events; it is the attempt to revert to the *context* of these events.

The politicised usage of ethno-history occurs at various levels—individuals, villages, ethnic group, territorial group. At the individual level, people do resort to ethno-historical constructions, such as genealogies, to prove their claims to land ownership. This is particularly important in Riau where land ownership is not always documented through title deeds. Some older people with extensive genealogical knowledge are often called upon as expert witnesses to give evidence in land ownership disputes.

At the village level, particularly in situations where there is resistance to land appropriation and resettlement, ethno-historical constructions are important when villagers want to prove that they are not just recent squatters with no title deeds but long settled communities with historical tenure. In this context, genealogies, grave sites, landmarks, indigenous narratives and other forms of ethno-historical constructions may be used. In the case of Penyengat, these ethno-historical constructions have been used to great effectiveness. The people of Penyengat have basically persuaded the Indonesian Government, not just at local administrative levels but right up to the Presidency, that their island is a valuable historical and cultural site that must be conserved and respected.

Even Suharto himself visited Penyengat and Raja Hamidah's grave during previous tours of Riau, when he was still President.

As a result, the Indonesian Government has legislated for the protection of Penyengat as a historical site: therefore, no outsider to Penyengat is allowed to buy land there and that no commercial building (e.g. foreign-owned hotel) can ever be built there. Only the original people of Penyengat are allowed to build houses and develop appropriate business activities, such as rest houses, small restaurants, etc. Penyengat is perhaps the most successful example of a community's usage of ethno-historical constructions to conserve their rights to their land and their way of life. What is more, they have so successfully persuaded the Indonesian government of the importance of Penyengat that they have been able to access public funds for the cultural conservation of their sacred sites—in particular, the royal graves and the royal mosque—as well as the infrastructural development of their island, for example, paved roads, street lights and telephone lines, no mean feat for a small island of 2000 people living on well water.

Significantly, the local leader is Raja Hamzah Yunus, a learned local historian who happens to be descended from the very first Viceroy of Riau who reigned in the 18th century. He is highly respected not only by his own community of Riau Malays throughout the whole province, but also by Indonesian bureaucrats in Tanjungpinang, Pekanbaru and even Jakarta. Furthermore, Raja Hamzah was himself employed as a civil servant in the Ministry of Culture and Education, thereby carrying a dual role as Indonesian bureaucrat and as an indigenous Riau Malay.

As noted by Derks (1997: 705), there are 'relatively few Malays in the higher ranks of the bureaucracy'. Those who are there, however, such as Raja Hamzah, can play important pivotal roles in harnessing governmental resources for local community purposes.

At the level of the ethnic group, ethno-historical constructions are useful for the protection and promotion of collective rights to larger domains of life—for example, holidays in the public calendar and the cultural identity of Riau as a province of Indonesia including publicly adopted costume, dances, music, literature, drama, and so on. Various institutions for the research and promotion of Riau Malay culture as the ethnic culture of Riau Province are in existence. These serve as important social bases for building a distinctive ethnic identity among Riau Malays as part of an ethnically diverse Indonesian identity that expresses *bhinneka tunggal ika* 'unity in diversity'.

Ethno-historical constructions serve as necessary resources for what Derks (1997) terms as 'Malay identity work'. These are 'necessary resources' because they represent the authentic source of Malay identity—that is, how such an identity came to be, in contradistinction to, say, Javanese identity—in the same way as personal identity is developed through biographical process. Even so, it

is not necessarily the case that 'Malay identity work' must necessarily be politicised.

The context of politicisation

As pointed out above, ethno-historical constructions become politicised when they are used as legitimating ideologies for the control of contested resources and territories. Derks (1997: 700) notes:

> Malay identity work in Indonesia is surely not a neutral activity, but rather a form of resistance to certain forms of domination…. Identity work can be triggered by an awareness of being economically slighted…. The Malays are not only thoroughly aware of the fact they are being denied an equitable portion of the benefits of their province's economic ascendancy, but also that they are the worse for their development. This becomes particularly clear with respect to the way the national government deals with land and the people who own it, live on it and from it. Especially in the mainland parts of Riau, where vast plots of land have been given to Jakarta-based conglomerates for only minimal fees, the local Malay population is forced to leave the soil they have tilled for generations.

Development processes occurring in Riau have been driven not by local needs but by external agendas emanating not only from Jakarta but also from Singapore. In this context, the formation of the 'Growth Triangle' in 1989—encompassing Singapore, Johor and Riau—should properly be understood as a collusion of interests between the national governments of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. From a local Riau perspective, the 'Growth Triangle' has meant the regionalisation and globalisation of resource extraction and transfer, not just to Jakarta, but beyond Indonesian boundaries, to Singapore in particular. Indeed, the key relationship in the 'Growth Triangle' is between resource-poor but capital-rich Singapore and resource-rich but capital-poor Riau. In this relationship, resources from Riau flow out (including fresh water, oil, bauxite, tin, timber) and capital from Singapore flows in but not to the people of Riau. (See Wee and Chou 1997, Chou and Wee 2000).

So who are the main Indonesian beneficiaries of the 'Growth Triangle'? They include Liem Sioe Liong (through his Salim group of companies), Suharto's family (especially his daughter Tutut, his son Bambang and his cousin Sudwikatmono), B J Habibie and his relatives, Caltex, oil-palm estates, timber logging companies, paper and pulp factories, golf courses, beach resorts and many other trans-national corporations. (See, for example, Aditjondro [no date]: <www.munindo.brd.de/george/george_tutut_3.html>).

A joke made up by the Riau Malays is that the name of the Riau island 'Batam' stands for '*Bila ada Tutut, anda mundur*' (When Tutut is around, you retreat).[14] The implication was that she gets first priority on all deals in Batam. Another joke that circulates among Riau Malays is that the richest group in Riau is the P3. This sounds like the name of a political party or some other body. Actually P3 stands for *putra-putri Presiden* (the sons and daughters of the President). During the time he was President, Suharto actively sought deals for members of his family members. For example, when he attended the funeral of Emperor Hirohito in Japan, he took the opportunity of asking the Japanese government to nominate a Japanese investor to go into a joint venture with his cousin. This information was told to me by the nominated Japanese investor who subsequently provided the capital for a joint venture to build a beach resort and golf course on Batam.

Even at lower levels of economic benefits, the beneficiaries are not the indigenous people of Riau. The jobs that have been created in town centres, factories, beach resorts and golf courses have been going to Javanese labour migrants, recruited directly by Jakarta-based labour agencies. Even before the formation of the 'Growth Triangle' and the huge influx of labour migrants from Java, there have long been Javanese transmigrants who were given tracts of land especially in mainland Riau.

In contrast, the indigenous population of Riau have been systematically dispossessed and impoverished to make room for these newcomers. The livelihood needs of the indigenous population have no place in this collusion of interests between foreign investors on the one hand and the Suharto clique on the other. Instead, the indigenous population are seen as an impediment to the comprehensive remapping and refashioning of Riau as a resource zone for these external interests.

Under the authoritarian regime of Suharto, land was often expropriated forcibly, even at gunpoint. In almost every case, inadequate or no compensation was given, because the villagers were treated as squatters without title deeds. Hoshour (1997) describes how funds and facilities designated for transmigration projects on the Riau-North Sumatra provincial border have been manipulated, resulting in embittered relations between Javanese transmigrants, Batak migrants and local Riau Malays.

Only in exceptional cases, such as Penyengat, have local communities been able to use ethno-historical resources effectively to obtain right of land tenure. In most cases, local communities have not been able to use ethno-historical resources so effectively for lack of literate knowledge, connections to high tradition, But for three decades, under the politically suppressive regime of Suharto, it was not safe for the Riau people to voice any grievance about land loss and unfair compensation.

[14] Tutut's full name is Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana. Batam is the Riau island that has been developed as an industrial zone in the 'Growth Triangle'.

Riau indigenism in post-Suharto Indonesia

In post-Suharto Indonesia, however, long-simmering discontent has erupted in numerous demonstrations and riots involving thousands of people all over Riau Province (e.g. Tanjung Pinang, Lagoi, Lobam, Pekanbaru). Two key messages conveyed in these demonstrations are:

- Demands for fair compensation for land and livelihood resources that have been unjustly appropriated from them in the last three decades for development projects such as industrial parks, estates, dams, resorts, golf courses, settlements for transmigrants.

- Exposés of corruption among officials of the Riau provincial government, such as the Governor, the District Head, etc.

The focus of the demonstrations on the corruption of local officials makes the point that these officials do not represent the people.

For example, the Ex-Governor of Riau, who held office for 10 years, was Soeripto, a retired Lieutenant-General from central Java:

> Soeripto was widely viewed as an ambassador in Riau for the Suharto family's diverse business interests, which include plantations, resorts and shipping. Soeripto's role in 'coordinating' lucrative sales of Riau sand for reclamation projects in Singapore has been debated heatedly, although the governor maintains he has never profited personally. Soeripto, whose two terms as governor are up, plans to stay on through December to oversee a transition to his successor. But that's too slow for Riau's student activists and for Muchtar, who accuses Soeripto of being busy 'salvaging his wealth' (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 July 1998).

Indeed, it was in response to local demands that the current Governor, Brigadier-General Saleh Djasit, was appointed in December 1998. As declared by Tabrani Rab, a leader in the Riau separatist movement: 'We don't want a Javanese to be Governor. Behind the Javanese, there is always conspiracy with the conglomerates.' What is noteworthy about this appointment is that this was the first time in Indonesian history that a Riau Malay became Governor of Riau. Previous Governors have all been Javanese. This appointment is part of a new Government policy in post-Suharto Indonesia to placate local discontent by appointing indigenes as provincial governors.

However, despite this placatory appointment, on 23 March 2000, 1200 protestors besieged and stormed the Riau Governor's office. They described themselves as representing the rural population of Riau who, they said, have been cheated of land in the Suharto era. They demanded that the Riau Governor take responsibility for compensating the people of Riau for their land

loss. When the Governor said that he could not address their demands without consulting others, they were angered and a packet of cooked rice was thrown at him. (See *The New Paper,* 23 March 2000). From an indigenous perspective, the appointment of a Riau Malay as Governor of Riau alone is seen as an inadequate response to local needs and demands.

Apart from the appointment of a Riau Malay as Governor of Riau, the Indonesian government's response has focussed on the dispersement of revenue and control over the oil industry in Riau. For example:

> Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid approved a regional government's direct-management role in an oil field run by a U.S. multinational, in the latest sign of how moves to disperse power away from Jakarta are affecting foreign business. Members of Mr. Wahid's government said the move is essential to placate rising provincial demands for a greater control of their natural resources. But some in Indonesia's oil and gas industry fear such action could ultimately discourage foreign investment by introducing another level of bureaucracy into their operations (*The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition*, 5 May 2000).

This is part of a new Government policy in post-Suharto Indonesia to placate local discontent by giving a larger share of revenue to the provinces, particularly revenue derived from provincial resources. Riau currently contributes almost 50 per cent of Indonesia's daily crude oil output at about 750,000 barrels per day. As Ehtisham Ahmad and Ali Mansoor (2000: 19) explain,

> Based on very conservative assumptions of oil and gas prices, it is estimated that, if the Law were implemented for the 1999/2000 budget, about Rp 2 trillion would be distributed to local governments as a result of the oil and gas revenue sharing, and three provinces (Riau, East Kalimantan, and…Aceh) would receive about 82 percent of the total local share. For Riau and…Aceh, the provincial governments' oil and gas receipts would amount to 70-80 percent of their existing revenue capacities.

However, this placatory policy has yet to appease the Riau population adequately for the following reasons:

- As noted above, it has been estimated that Riau (and Aceh) would receive '70 to 80 percent of their existing revenue capacities' from oil and gas receipts. But it is not yet clear whether this transfer of revenue has actually happened under the Abdurrahman Wahid government. There has hitherto been a lack of transparency in government accounts; this situation has yet to be changed systematically.

- Secondly, even if the transfer of revenue has been effected, there is no systematic method of ensuring a 'trickle down' process to satisfy grassroot needs and demands on key issues such as inadequate compensation for land loss.

- Thirdly and most importantly, apart from the 70 to 80 percent revenue transfer of oil and gas receipts from the central government to the provincial government, no other economic reform has been discussed for Riau. The pattern of land and resource ownership that prevailed in the Suharto regime still holds. The Jakarta elite and transnational corporations still own the greater part of land and resources in Riau..Despite his downfall, Suharto's family members and cronies continue to own vast tracts of land and immense amounts of natural resources in Riau. Indeed, after his downfall and during the Presidency of his successor, Habibie, a massive land concession on mainland Riau was given to a Suharto crony—Liem Sioe Liong—for development into a reservoir for Singapore.

In a situation where grassroot demands for economic justice are not seen to be met, the people of Riau have, in some cases, taken the law into their own hands—for example, by directly reclaiming property that they feel was taken away from them, such as estates and golf courses. Many transnational companies have experienced systematic vandalism and pilferage—for example, Caltex the major oil company located in Dumai.

As this discussion shows, the 'Riau' that is being placated by the Indonesian Government is the Riau run by a Governor who has just had cooked rice thrown at him by rural protestors, albeit his local origins. It is not the Riau of indigenous Malays who have been dispossessed of their land and impoverished through so-called development projects. Therefore, all the supposedly placatory gestures are for nought, because they are based on two questionable assumptions—that the Riau provincial government represents indigenous Riau and that granting a larger share of revenue to this provincial government will adequately satisfy local needs and demands.

In this context of dispossession and impoverishment, are there significant articulations of class oppositions, of poor versus rich? Interestingly, these are relatively absent. Instead, there are clearer articulations of indigenism versus outside interests. Why is this so? Because, as mentioned above, even at lower levels of economic benefits, the beneficiaries of jobs and land have been Javanese migrants who are also poor. The fault-line is still between 'Java and non-Java', to use a dichotomy by a Riau Malay respondent. In this context, what the Riau Malays are asserting are not the rights of the poor but the rights of indigenism, the rights that come from belonging to a place.

Two questions follow from this assertion:

- Who belongs to the place?
- Who owns the place?

So who belongs in Riau? And who owns Riau? These are questions of membership and ownership. To answer them, ethno-historical constructions remain important. In this context, membership cannot come from birth alone, since Javanese migrants can also have children born in Riau. To go beyond the fact of birth, one needs to know one's descent and kinship links, one's genealogy. One thus belongs because one is descended from the original people of Riau. This necessitates a backward-looking orientation to the past in order to legitimate one's claim to indigeny in the present.

As for the ownership of Riau, this obviously has to go beyond current facts of ownership as documented in title deeds and land grants, as these are mostly held by non-indigenous people, such as Suharto's children. The assertion of the indigenous ownership of Riau has to rest on claims of original ownership and length of ownership. Thus, the Riau Malays own Riau because prior to the present situation, they were the original owners of Riau who have been so for centuries. Again, ethno-historical constructions are critical to legitimate this claim—for example, by quantifying the length of ownership, at least 800 years, according to my respondents.

A movement for political autonomy in Riau: factions based on relative indigenism

These assertions of membership and ownership have now coalesced beyond random individual claims into a collective movement for political autonomy. It is significant that on mainland Riau, one faction leading the quest for political autonomy is led by an organisation called the 'Riau Cultural Institute', headed by Tabrani Rab. As noted above, cultural revitalisation and 'Malay identity work' can become a staging phase for subsequent politicisation.

Tabrani Rab reportedly cancelled the declaration of independence of Riau in March 1999, due to a fear of clashes with the Indonesian armed forces. But in December 1999, a provincial congress organised by the Riau Community Communication Forum voted in favour of independence.

In response to this drive for an independent Riau state, another faction calling for federalism has arisen. The chief advocate of the federalist camp is Syarwan Hamid, a former Home Affairs Minister under Suharto. It seems to be the case that the separatist movement is home-grown, while the federalist movement is Jakarta-linked:

> The demand for a federal state is only supported by the Riau people in Jakarta. Syarwan has communicated this idea to us but we choose to disagree," Tabrani told *The Jakarta Post* by phone from the provincial capital of Pekanbaru *(The Jakarta Post,* 16 November 1999).

However, there is another twist in this story. The movement for an independent Riau state is very much based on mainland Riau. The territory that is to be the potential Riau state is identical to Riau Province, as it is currently constituted. In this context, the position of the Malays of the Riau Archipelago is particularly interesting, as they are calling not for an independent Riau state but for the Riau archipelago to be made a separate province within Indonesia.

Why has this split happened? Because the Malays of the Riau Archipelago feel that even if Riau Province were to become an independent Riau state, their archipelagic part of Riau would not benefit. They feel that in the current situation, the Riau Archipelago is contributing substantially more to provincial revenue than does mainland Riau. There are more resources flowing from insular Riau to mainland Riau than *vice-versa*. They see the likelihood of this inequitable flow continuing even under an independent Riau. Therefore, in a situation where an independent Riau state that is calqued on top of the current Riau Province is likely to lead to only a change of masters but no change in the current power relationship. Given this analysis, the Malays of the Riau Archipelago want to keep their resources for themselves.

What is particularly interesting in this context is that ethno-historical constructions are now being called upon to justify this drive for province-hood for insular Riau. The Malays of the Riau Archipelago refer to the history of the Riau sultanate from the 18th century to the 20th century, which had a territory spanning the Riau archipelago, Singapore and Johor—indeed, the same configuration as the modern-day 'Growth Triangle'. The Sumatran part of Riau Province was not part of the Riau sultanate of that period. Indeed, as a result of a war in 1722 between the ancestors of the aristocratic Malays of the Riau Archipelago (who became Viceroys of Riau) and Raja Kecik (pretender to the Johor throne)—a war won by the former—the defeated Raja Kecik withdrew to what is now mainland Riau where he founded another kingdom called Siak, located near present-day Pekanbaru, the provincial capital. In more recent history, as mentioned above, the Riau Archipelago was economically autonomous in the early days of the republic (1950 to 1965), when it did not even use the Indonesian *rupiah*. It was not until 1966, with the commencement of Suharto's New Order, that the Riau Archipelago and the Sumatran part of Riau Province became integrated as one economic entity, both using the Indonesian *rupiah.*

Such ethno-historical constructions have been submitted by the Malays of the Riau Archipelago to the Jakarta government to justify their request for provincehood. In their opinion, approval is likely to be given as there have been

many other such requests from provincehood coming from different parts of Indonesia, which are in similar situations, so much so that an entire bureau has been set up in Jakarta to deal with such requests.

Politically, from the central government's point of view, granting provincehood to the Riau Archipelago is a lesser evil than having a breakaway Riau state. This would, moreover, split the Riau independence movement and reduce the validity of their mission, since it is questionable whether the Sumatran part of Riau Province alone is viable as a state. Given this logic, it is not surprising that Tabrani Rab, the leader of the Riau independence movement in Pekanbaru (the provincial capital), is vehemently opposed to the proposed Province of the Riau Archipelago. So while the fault-line between Java and non-Java is a very major fault-line indeed, there are other minor fault-lines, such as this one that has emerged between mainland Riau and insular Riau.

Even in this case, the fundamental issue is about indigenous rights to resources. The Malays of insular Riau are asserting that as the indigenous people of their archipelago, they have priority rights to the resources of their place, rather than the Malays of mainland Riau. Indigenism is still the key issue—in this case, expressed not in ethnic terms (i.e. as Malays) but in territorial terms (i.e. as Riau indigenes). The paradigmatic relationship that is implicit across all these different fault-lines is the relationship of marginalized indigene versus an external marginalizing protagonist. In this relationship, the external protagonist should be understood not as a single entity, but rather, as a locus which can be occupied by different entities at different times, singly or jointly.

Indeed, my respondents in the Riau Archipelago are quite aware of this relationship and the changing identities of their protagonist. In their ethno-historical chronology, *zaman Belanda* (the Dutch era) was followed by *zaman Jepang* (the Japanese era), followed in turn by *zaman Indonesia* (the Indonesian era)—each era marked by the identity of the protagonist. The positioning of the Indonesian Republic in the locus of the marginaliser implicates not only Java and Jakarta, but in the latest development described above, mainland Riau in the context of a Riau Province created by the Indonesian government.

CONCLUSION

Diverse indigenisms in pre- and post-Suharto Indonesia

As shown above, for two decades after the formation of the Indonesian nation-state (1945-1965)—namely, the Sukarno years—all was not well in the body politic. There was more *bhinneka* 'diversity' than *ika* 'unity' even then. There is no room in this paper to discuss other centrifugal and oppositional processes occurring elsewhere in the archipelago at that time—for example, the establishment of the Republic of South Maluku (1950-1956). Suffice it to note that all the fault-lines that have now widened into chasms were in place right from the very inception of Indonesia as a nation-state.

Suharto's New Order papered over these cracks through military force. On the other hand, it is also Suharto's New Order that has exacerbated these cracks through blatant political and economic inequities resulting from corruption and and nepotism.Furthermore, these inequities have been ethnically coloured through combination with the continuing Java-centrism of the Indonesian nation-state. This has led to resistance couched in terms of indigenism—that is, the assertion of indigenous rights over land and resources.

In post-Suharto Indonesia, there is now plurality at the centre and plurality at the periphery. The fault-line between centre and periphery has fragmented into competing attempts at the centre to deal effectively with the periphery. This has led to fault-lines in Jakarta (as, for example, between Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati). At the periphery, there are multiple assertions of indigenous rights (as, for example, in Riau, Aceh, Kalimantan, Maluku, West Timor, Papua, etc.) Not even Java itself is exempt from such fragmentation; indigenisms are being asserted in Sunda, Banten, East Java and so on.

There is no longer one relationship between centre and periphery, or even one centre and one periphery. There are multiple attempts to be the centre, there are multiple peripheries, and there are multiple interactions between all these. This increasing multiplicity reduces any attempted orthodoxy asserted by any centre (for example, the idea of a unitary Indonesia) into just one of many competing versions and not necessarily the best version of the truth. The impression of chaos to an outside observer, conveyed through reports in the international media, derives from this increasing multiplicity, where there is a lack of clarity of what constitutes the centre, the periphery and the relationship between them.

But the view from the inside is surprisingly not as chaotic and as random as it appears from the outside, especially at the local level. For example, in Riau, there is discernible clarity in the local discourses emanating from the ground. People do not seem to be confused; they are able to articulate what they want. They do not all want the same thing, but they do know where their differences lie and perhaps even how these may be resolved.

Indeed, I have found that there is a lack of surprise among the Riau Malays at the fragmentation that has occurred in post-Suharto Indonesia. Instead, there is an attitude of 'Well, what do you expect? We have always known that this would happen.' This calmness evidently derives from the subterranean persistence of alternative local discourses, that have been in existence right from the very inception of the Indonesian nation-state. In this context, all that has happened is the surfacing and visibilisation of these alternative discourses which have always been there at local, subterranean levels. In these discourses, the peripheries have always been centres-of-intent to themselves, in one sense or another, not necessarily amounting to full-scale separatism. The difference is that there is now a greater possibility of realising such intent.

However, as shown above, there is more than just a singular intent. Within the Riau movement for local autonomy, there are diverse political agendas. These diverse agendas apparently also exist in the Aceh movement—in that case, between the aristocrats and the religious teachers (Virginia Matheson Hooker: personal communication). Furthermore, these agendas are focussed on alternative *local* futures. The questions they ask concern, for example, the kind of Riau or the kind of Aceh that is desired. These agendas are not concerned with the kind of Indonesia or even the kind of Sumatra that is desired.

Why is this the case? Why are the political agendas of the periphery so limited in their scope? Why do they not stake out a larger scope? Why do they not seek to shape a new Indonesia? The answer, I gather from my Riau Malay respondents, is that Jakarta politics is beyond their ken and control; there are so many players and factions there already without them joining the fray. Even the politics of Sumatra is too complex, involving not just Malays, but other ethnic groups with their own agendas—for example, the Minangkabaus, Bataks, Acehnese, and the people of Palembang, Jambi and South Sumatra. Therefore, the Riau Malays feel that the only politics that is within their sphere of control is the politics of Riau.

Gone are the 1950s when there were two movements emanating from Sumatra that dared to try to bring about a different Indonesia. As mentioned above, these were as follows:

- The armed revolt which broke out in Aceh (1953-1962) as part of an uprising by the *Darul Islam* movement, seeking to establish an Islamic State of Indonesia—*Negara Islam Indonesia.*

- The military rebellion of 1956-1961 when a group of Sumatran Colonels set up in Bukittingi (West Sumatra) a rival Government of Indonesia called the *Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia* (PRRI) 'Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia'.

These and other alternative agendas have historically been expressed in armed struggles, because no space for civil debates has ever been institutionalised in either the Dutch East Indies or in Indonesia. As noted by Elson (1998: <www.gu.edu.au/centre/gapc/proflecture.html>), with regards to the formation of Indonesia as a nation-state:

> The history of the imagining of Indonesia in colonial times…is itself a sorry one. For a variety of reasons associated with space, culture, the colonial legacy and the efficiency of the Dutch apparatuses of repression, the movements which gradually brought these imaginings into focus as a modern Indonesian nation state (rather than, say, a re-established Javanese or Sumatran kingdom, an Islamic state, or even a global workers' paradise) never spoke much to each other, never engaged in the kind of vigorous debate and dialogue

> which might have moulded a clearer sense of what this Indonesian state and nation might look like or develop into. Moreover, they never had much effective (as distinct from distant, emotional and romanticised) attachment to the people they thought they represented, never thought it worthwhile to consult them, were never likely to be guided or directed by their wishes, or to be responsive to their real needs. All that the nationalist elite could agree upon was that there should be an Indonesia, and that it should, in some vague sense, be free. This foreshortened imagining was the first of modern Indonesia's tragedies…. The 1945 Constitution of the Republic was essentially the work of Java-based conservative secular nationalists who leant heavily on the ideas of Dutch-trained legal experts. Islam, the Left, and the Outer Islands were effectively excluded.

I suggest that the 'foreshortened imagining' of the Indonesian nation-state was not just 'the first of modern Indonesia's tragedies'; it is a *continuing* tragedy. The promotion of civil politics that would allow civil debates between alternative discourses was alien to the regimes of both Sukarno and Suharto. In particular, the patrimonial politics of Suharto's New Order centralised power (therefore all debates and decisions) in himself and a small elite of kin and allies.

While it is arguable that some form of civil politics has emerged in post-Suharto Indonesia, under Presidents Habibie and Abdurrahman Wahid, Indonesian politics remains firmly Jakarta-centred, such that even alternative discourses about the future shape of post-Suharto Indonesia remain centralised in Jakarta. It is because of the polarising effect of such centralisation, I argue, that the politics of the diverse peripheries have become localised, indigenised and fragmented, with each definable periphery spinning off in its own centrifugal trajectory.

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