

Chapter 8: Reviving Malay Connections in Southeast Asia

Minako Sakai¹

Community leaders in the Malay diaspora across Southeast Asia are promoting a unified ethnic identity to increase opportunities for socio-economic development. In one example, after the fall of Indonesia's centralistic Suharto government, ethnic Malay politicians and intellectuals from the islands of Sumatra and Kalimantan began building a transnational network for business, cultural, and educational collaborations based on their shared identity as Pan-Malay or 'one stock' (*serumpun*). At the leading edge of this is an organization known as the Malay Islamic World movement (Dunia Melayu Dunia Islam or DMDI)² led by the Chief Minister of Melaka in Malaysia, and the Vice President of the United Malays National Organization party (UMNO), Datu Seri Ali Rustam. The governor of the Province of Sultan Kudarat in the Philippines, Pax Mangudadatu, is Vice President of DMDI.

The organization came into existence in October 2000. Participants include most Sumatran and Kalimantan governors, and representatives of Malay communities in Madagascar, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Cambodia, and southern Thailand. Malays in these countries are minority groups, often suffering cultural and economic marginalisation. For instance, the Malays in Cambodia and Vietnam, known as the Chams, are descendants from the kingdom of Champa. They speak Malay, are the core of Muslim communities, are distinctively different from the majority Buddhist population, and were severely persecuted during the Pol Pot years. In Sri Lanka, Malays are predominantly descendants of Javanese

¹ This research was funded by a Faculty Research Grant (2003) from the University of New South Wales at ADFA campus, Canberra, Australia.

² For collections of essays presented at the DMDI, see Bakar (2001, 2002a) and Sekretariat Dunia Melayu Dunia Islam (2002).

who were exiled by the Dutch colonial power between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They are part of a minority group of Muslims, but even within its Muslim population of Arab origins, the Malays are a smaller minority (Mohan 1987: 10).

Despite the existence of the broadly-defined 'Malay world' as a vibrant economic and cultural hub in the region prior to the advent of colonial powers in Southeast Asia, the meaning of 'Malay' can be difficult to define.³ Broadly speaking, the term describes the Malay race which populates island Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, Brunei and Malaysia. The complexity of Malayness is compounded by socio-political contexts in which the meaning of Malayness has been negotiated and contested over a period of time. As the term '*masuk Islam, masuk Melayu*' (to accept Islam is to become Malay) indicates, being Muslim is also central to Malay identity. Although Malayness is multi-dimensional and thus subject to various interpretations, here I broadly refer to the people who use the Malay language and follow Malay cultural traits.

The creation of post-colonial Southeast Asian nation-states blurred the existence of shared Malay identity across the region. In order to achieve national unity, the newly independent nation-states highlighted and promoted unity within their respective nations (Drake 1989), whilst deliberately restricting ties between border areas.⁴ Under these nation-building projects, cross-regional ties have been carefully watched to minimise potentially disintegrating forces.

³ There exists a vast amount of scholarly work on this topic. For recent studies, see (Barnard 2004), Andaya (2004), Reid (2004), and Shamsul (2004).

⁴ For example, the Riau Archipelago was a thriving regional economy, using its own currency before the onset of the *konfrontasi* period between Indonesia and Malaysia. See Sutjiatiningsih (1989) for the economic fall of the Riau Archipelago after the Indonesian government forbade the use of Riau Dollar which had been used to trade in the border region including Singapore.

In this chapter I examine concerted efforts to revive regional partnerships among the Malay communities in Southeast Asia, and look at reasons why this is occurring. At the sixth convention of DMDI, which I attended in September 2005, the chair encouraged the promotion of Malay identity to compete against the European Union. Many Malay regions are rich in resources but suffer serious poverty, and economic globalisation is presenting major challenges (Ahmed 2005). There is a growing sense that globalisation will be the final blow to the Malay Muslim communities as it will impose Western cultural hegemony, and is concentrating world wealth in the hands of a few powerful nations.

In his opening speech at the DMDI convention, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, cited many examples of the glorious past of Malay peoples and appealed to fellow Malays to unite as one Malay stock in order to survive the challenge of globalisation. Participants who filled the opening ceremony appeared galvanised after his speech, imagining the formation of a Malay world network. The current popularity of Pan-Malayness across Insular Southeast Asia is a sharp contrast to the last half century when the concept of transnational Malay identity has been suppressed.

In order to understand why Pan-Malayness has suddenly become an attractive attribute for the disparate Malay communities, this chapter will first outline how Pan-Malay identity was used in political spheres during post-colonial nation building processes. Secondly I will analyse how the politics of ethnicity in each independent state has affected these communities, and how they have found a common ground for aspiring to Malay nationhood. Lastly I will summarise the DMDI activities as an emergent Pan-Malay socio-economic movement. Despite its economic role, I will argue that Pan-Malayness has become attractive principally to preserve Malay identity within development and modernization. These concerns were expressed to me by Tenas Effendy, a well-known ethnic Malay scholar from Riau in Indonesia, who stated that ‘people can survive economic domination such as

colonisation, but cultural domination will sweep away all'. In the past, a well-known Malay cultural hero, Hang Tuah, declared that 'The Malays will not perish from the face of the world'. But many are worried that this may not still be the case.

Historical Imagining of Pan-Malayness in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia

The definitions and use of Malayness are highly historical and contextual, and I intend to show that the elusive nature of Malayness has captured the imagination of political activists. My geographical coverage of Pan-Malayness is limited to the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, from where the current main players of the DMDI movement have emerged.

Let's start with the Filipino imagination of Pan-Malay identity. Historically, this was strongly presented in the political visions of Jose Rizal, a national hero of the Philippines who lived in the nineteenth century. He led the nationalistic propagandist movement and supported opposition to the Spanish authorities. Responding to Spanish perceptions that Malay Filipinos were inferior, he formed a secret group in Paris to liberate all Malay people from colonisers, including those in Malaya, Indonesia and Borneo (Alonto 2003:188). A similar view was expressed by his contemporary, Apolinario Mabini, whose ideas influenced the Filipino Revolution. He saw the Revolution as a liberation of the Malay people, and aspired for the creation of a co-federation of Asian states, sharing Malay culture and civilisation (Alonto 2003:189). Pan-Malayness was then explicitly expressed by Wenceslao Quinto Vinzons in the early twentieth century. He led student activist movements in the University of the Philippines and set up the Pan Malayan Union (Perhempoean Orang Melayoe) whose motto was *Malaya Irredenta* (Malaya Unredeemed). This had members from the Philippines, Thailand, the Malay Peninsula, and Polynesia (Alonto 2003:190). The group used Malay language for secret ritual practice, promoted study of the Malay race, and aimed to develop a sentiment of unity. The Pan Malayan Union had some influential

members including the ninth President of the Philippines, Diosdado Macapagal (1961-1965), and Senator Ahmad Domocao Alonto (1957-1960).

Filipino politicians who dreamt of creating a Pan-Malay nation also considered adopting the name Malaysia, which had referred to the overall Malay archipelago before becoming the name of the newly independent Malaysian nation in 1963.⁵ The former Filipino Vice-President of the Pan-Malayan Union presented a bill in the Senate in 1962 to change the name of the Philippines to Malaysia (Alonto 2003 p.190). While the bill was debated in the Congress, the name was adopted by Tunku Abdul Rahman, who led the Malaysian nationalist movement, and the term narrowed to refer to the country-in-waiting, consisting of the Malay Peninsula and territories of the former British colonies in Borneo.⁶

Now let us turn our attention to the Melayu Raya (Greater Malaya) movement which was strongly advocated by a Peninsula Malay, Ibrahim Yaacob. He aspired to create a Malay nation (Bangsa Melayu) based on Pan-Malay identity across the Archipelago. The movement gained momentum prior to the independence declaration of Indonesia in 1945. Yaacob intended to establish an independent nation consisting of the Malay Archipelago including the Philippines. As a practical step he lobbied his Indonesian counterparts, Muhammad Yamin and Sukarno, so that the territory of independent Indonesia would include colonial Malaya. Yamin and Sukarno supported this by voting that the future territory of independent Indonesia consist of the former Dutch East Indies combined with Malaya, the northern territories of Borneo, New Guinea and Timor. The proposal received 39 votes out of 64 at the

⁵ For example, the advocate of the Greater Malaya, Ibrahim Yaacob, used this word to refer to the Malay Archipelago in 1951 (Soda 1998: 23).

⁶ Melayu Raya was one of the terms Tunku Abdul Rahman favoured to refer to the proposed integrated territory across the Peninsular and the Borneo territories but the term was withdrawn in view of the anxiety held among non Muslims and non Malays in Borneo (Soda 1998:26).

second session of the Committee for the Investigation to Prepare Indonesian Independence on July 10 1945, only one month before the Independence declaration (Soda 1998:10; Mackie 1974:21).⁷ Eventually Sukarno changed his mind and narrowed the territory to that of the former Netherland Indies due to practical concerns about fighting the British and the Dutch at the same time.

It is important to note that Pan-Malay identity, and unification with Indonesia, did not appeal to the Malay elites in colonial Malaya. There, the dominant element of Malayness derived from the sultans and aristocracy (Liow 2005:66). A broader shared cultural identity was too foreign for the Malay elites.⁸ After Indonesia declared independence, Ibrahim Yaacob left colonial Malaya for Indonesia. The political movement to seek unification with Indonesia was left in the hands of those who stayed in Malaya. They formed the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) in October 1945 jointly with others closely related to the Malayan Communist Party (Soda 1998:19). The MNP pushed for the independence of colonial Malaya under the auspices of Indonesia. This raised concerns among the Malay conservative elites, the sultans, and the British. The MNP was therefore banned in 1953 but later emerged in Indonesia as the Independence of Malaya Movement (Liow 2005:71). However, Pan-Malay identity never became a central force in defining the nationalism of either Malaysia or Indonesia.

The political imagination of Malay nationhood (*bangsa Melayu*) continued to be promoted by various politicians in the region during the first half of the 1960s. For example,

⁷ The Committee consisted of three Japanese and 61 Indonesians. Two other proposals were also presented. The proposal to include only the former territory of the East Indies received 19 votes while the proposal to include the former East Indies minus Papua combined with colonial Malaya received 6 votes. In other words, 70 percent supported the inclusion of colonial Malaya into the independent Indonesian state.

⁸ Ibrahim Yaacob showed strong disrespect for the Malay royals. See Milner (1995:257-8).

a series of incidents was triggered by Diosdado Macapagal, the father of the current Philippines president Gloria Magapagal Arroyo. He became the ninth President in 1961 and strongly believed that the Philippines had territorial ownership of Sabah on the island of Borneo (Sussman 1983:212). According to Poulgrain (1998: 232-236), Macapagal's Sabah claim derived in part from Filipino government apprehension about the danger of a predominantly Muslim Federation of Malaysia or even a federation of Borneo states. A possible secession movement by the Muslim dominant Mindanao and the Sulu, geographically close to Borneo, would endanger the territorial integrity of the Philippines. Sukarno, on the other hand, saw the Federation of Malaysia as neo-colonial political intervention and opposed the plan, which eventually led to the military confrontation between Malaysia and Indonesia known as *konfrontasi* (1963-1966).

In light of these hostile developments in the neighbouring countries, Macapagal proposed the Greater Malayan Confederation in July 1962 for countries sharing Malay origins.⁹ Maphilindo, an acronym for Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia, was an enterprise by which the three countries were to be brought closer through their Malay regional unity (Liow 2005:100).¹⁰ The Maphilindo plan also appealed to Filipino politicians who wanted to give a more Asian cast to their foreign policies (Mackie 1974:165-170).

⁹ The initial proposal of the federation was to include the Philippines, Malaya, Singapore, Brunei, Sarawak and Sabah (Sussman 1983:213).

¹⁰ To date analyses of Maphilindo focus on the development of *konfrontasi*, paying little attention to the Malay connections in the political scheme. It is important that the significance of Maphilindo should be placed within the Greater Malaya movements, as demonstrated by Filipino historian, Salazar (1998).

Furthermore the three countries shared a common interest in dealing with the rising power of local Chinese (Liow 2005:217).¹¹

Pan-Malayness suffered in the mid 1960s because Maphilindo was marred by the development of *konfrontasi*. Hostility at that time created a cultural gap between Indonesians and Malaysians (Hooker 2000:183). Active cultural collaborations between them further diminished during the Suharto New Order period, and the socio-cultural gap across the Strait of Melaka is still being felt today.¹² Furthermore the formation of ASEAN in 1967 cemented the territorial integrity of newly independent states of Southeast Asia, putting an official end to Malay nationhood dreams.¹³

Malay predicaments in the independent states

Now let me highlight the socio-cultural and political situation of Malays in the three nations after their independence. I will outline some important developments in each country which I see as the emergence of a common ground for the current renewed interest in Pan-Malayness. I will start with the situation of Malays in Malaysia.

¹¹ For example anti-Chinese riots took place in Malaysia in 1964, 1967 and 1969 while the anti-communist mass killings, which included ethnic Chinese, took place in Indonesia in 1965.

¹² For example, the Malay people in North Sumatra still express their anguish and frustration that during the *konfrontasi* war was waged against the Peninsula with which they have had long affinity and family relations (interview with Oka Saidin, Medan July 20 2004). A similar view was expressed in an opinion article published in *Riau Pos* (13 March 2005, Indonesia-Malaysia Makin Jauh?). The author also emphasised that increasing differences in Malay and Indonesian languages makes communication between the two nations difficult.

¹³ Sani (1976:11) points out that Melayu Raya is regarded as a failed political movement and that studies on the Melayu Raya concept are neglected. This gap has been filled by some recent works (Milner 1995 and Soda 2000) although these focus on the impact of Melayu Raya for Malaysian nationalism.

Malaysia had a series of anti-Chinese riots in the 1960s caused by economic disparity between Malays and Chinese. Consequently, the government launched its New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971, aiming to reduce Malay poverty by raising income levels and creating a Malay business class. It was intended that the predominant image of Malays as peasants and government administrators should be replaced by a business community to be given preference in obtaining licences, credit, and government contacts. Chinese and foreign enterprises were encouraged to restructure so that at least 30 percent of shareholders would be Malays.¹⁴ As a result, by 1990 the Malays and indigenous peoples held more than 50 percent of white-collar and working class positions while Malay share ownership rose from 2.4 percent in 1970 to 20.3 percent in 1990 (Crouch 1996:238). The government also prioritised scholarships and places at educational institutions for Malays, as well as emphasizing Malay cultures and Islam in government ceremonies.

Although progress was achieved in business and economic development, the Malays' dilemma was not over. In 1991, then Prime Minister Mahatir launched a new program known as Vision 2020 to replace the NEP. He aimed to create a united Malaysia through knowledge, economic success, and dynamism (Hooker 2003:260). This vision called for 'New Malays' with skills in technology and business, with international outlooks, showing leadership in politics and economics to counteract the perception of Malays as confused, dependent, and unsure of their direction (Taib 1993:3-16). The Malaysian leader complained that 'Malays are laid-back and prone to take the easy way out. Working hard, taking risks and being patient is not a part of their culture' (The New Malay Dilemma, speech at the Harvard Club Malaysia dinner, 29 July 2002). More recently, Prime Minister Badawi repeated that the Malays are

¹⁴ For one analysis of NEP, see Crouch (1996:24-55).

still reluctant to walk without a crutch and are not living with dignity and pride, hence should be re-born as New Malays.¹⁵

Despite that criticism, the nation's economic prosperity and the rising economic power of Malays are in sharp contrast to ethnic Malays in Sumatra, Indonesia. During the Dutch colonial period, Malay sultans and aristocrats in North Sumatra had enjoyed special privileges and accumulated massive wealth. This created class tension and ethnic hostility. During the Social Revolution (1945-1950), Malay sultans and aristocrats were killed or arrested. Many Malay farmers were evicted from plantation land as they were seen to represent European-Malay supremacy (Langenberg 1985:116). Since that time Malays, including the former aristocracy, have remained relatively impoverished. In a symbolic sense, one manifestation of this is the poor condition of the Deli Sultanate palace in North Sumatra, some parts of which are now open to the public as a museum. Because little or no funds have been allocated from either the central or regional governments, maintenance of the palace has not been carried out. The lack of interest in the upkeep of Malay cultural heritage is attributed to the Indonesian central government policy of neglecting regional heritage while protecting the political and economic power of the Sultan of Yogyakarta in Central Java.¹⁶

Since the Social Revolution in North Sumatra Province, Malays have become not only politically weak, but also culturally and economically marginalised in their homeland (Lamry 1996: iii). Their main occupations are as peasants, fishers, and small traders. The social situation for the Malays in North Sumatra has further declined as they have been outnumbered by immigrant Javanese, Chinese, and Bataks.¹⁷ The recent implementation of

¹⁵ Badawi statement at the 55th UMNO General Assembly on September 25 2004.

¹⁶ Around the time Indonesian regional autonomy was implemented in 2001, there was significant interest in reviving the Malay sultanates, and reclaiming regional cultural heritage.

¹⁷ Indonesian population census (2000), discussed in Bulletin Langan Kuning, No. 2, Year 1, August-December 2002, p. 7.

regional autonomy has created hope among the North Sumatran Malays that these problems will be addressed through economic empowerment projects targeting agriculture and fishing (*Kompas*, 13 Juli 2000, Masyarakat Melayu Sumut Kian Terpinggirkan).

In West Sumatra Province, shortly after Indonesian independence, residents were disillusioned by the centralism of the new Republic of Indonesia. Their frustration at the lack of autonomy and egalitarianism eventually led to rebellion against the central government in 1958 (Kahin 1999:229). Suharto's New Order government (1966-1998) continued to pursue Java-centred economic development and promoted the Javanisation of other Indonesian cultures. As a result the number of Sumatrans, and particularly Malays, in important government positions decreased at both the central and regional levels.¹⁸

Elsewhere in Sumatra, the fate of ethnic Malays in Riau Province was not so different. During the New Order period Riau received a flood of external investment in palm oil and petrol, but the majority of the Malay population in Riau remain poor.¹⁹ After the fall of Suharto, Riau-Malay identity was chosen by local leaders to describe opposition to central government domination (Saifuddin and Hidayah 2001: 563). An independent province was declared in March 1999 and was also recommended by a People's Congress the following year. However, the momentum of the independence movement did not last long enough to become a serious threat, and the declaration was revoked. This was mainly because Riau politics were narrow in scope and could not influence Jakarta (Wee 2002). It suffices to say

¹⁸ Bahar and Tadjoeddin (2004) analyse the position of the Minangkabau of Sumatra as a minority group in Indonesia. The title of their publication, "Still we have hope", suggests the extent of concerns held among the Minangkabau regarding their social and political power.

¹⁹ *Kompas* (Pembentukan Laskar Melayu Gerakan Kultural, 8 Maret 2004) reports that 40 percent of the Riau population is poor and 60 percent cannot afford to finish primary education. To deal with this issue, in 2004 the district head of Bengkalis in Riau Province introduced free education for 12 years (*Kompas* 12 April 2004 Bengkalis Bebaskan Seluruh Biaya Pendidikan).

these incidents demonstrate the extent of frustration the Malay Riau people have had towards their poverty-stricken state and Jakarta's domination.²⁰

Now my discussion moves to the Philippines, where since the time of American colonisation, authorities have tried to enhance national unity through cultural integration. Malay Muslims were targeted as they were regarded as primitive.²² Muslims in Mindanao and Sulu opposed the direct rule of Christian Filipinos but in 1935 the Philippine Commonwealth government was established, including Mindanao and Sulu. In 1957 the Philippine government created the Commission on National Integration, which aimed to bring about advancement of minorities including Muslims. The Commission promoted centralised education systems in which Christian values were permeated (Horvatich 2003:19-23). As a result, the Filipino education systems were regarded as programs in which Muslims were assimilated to Christianity (Blanchetti-Revelli 2003:59). However, funds for Islamic education came from the Middle East in the form of scholarships in the 1950s and 1960s when an Islamic revival was already taking place in Sulu and Mindanao (Horvatich 2003:23). In addition to the nationalisation program through education, Christian Filipinos were encouraged to migrate into Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan, reducing the Muslim population to a minority in their homeland. Christian migrants emerged as a wealthier group. Furthermore,

²⁰ See Azhar (1997: 765) and Derks (1997:702) for perceptions of the Riau Malays about Indonesian national cultural policies. Recently a pro-Jakarta Riau politician, Syarwan Hamid, created a cultural organisation known as Laskar Melayu Bersatu Riau, which aims to improve the fate of Riau children. He was a former Minister of Internal Affairs under the Habibie government, but stated that Riau has been marginalised throughout the sixty years since Indonesian independence (Kompas, 8 Maret 2004, Pembentukan Laskar Melayu Gerakan Kultural).

²² Such views still prevail in the minds of some. For example, McAmis (2002:55), a retired Lutheran missionary and a consultant for the Lutheran Church in the Philippines writes 'perhaps the most primitive of the Muslims living in Sulu are the Badjaos'.

as Coronel Ferrer explains in Chapter Four, to develop plantation agriculture, the Filipino government legislated to acquire land traditionally owned by Muslims (Islam 1998:448). Against the process of Christian Filipinisation, identity as a Muslim has become political, and has brought together many Muslims asking for secession from the Philippines (Brown 1988:65).

Why is Pan-Malayness attractive?

Having explored the history surrounding Pan-Malayness and the predicaments of Malay regions in the three countries, examples of the sudden surge of interest in Pan-Malay identity can be elucidated.

Malaysia

When I interviewed the Chief Minister of the Melaka State, Ali Rustam, in February 2003, he expressed the view that, despite the pro-Malay New Economic Policy, ethnic Malays have been marginalised in their homeland. He feels that the Malay people, who once had a great kingdom such as Sriwijaya, have been deprived of an opportunity to progress, and to develop a cultural heritage separate from other traditions. When he was elected as the Chief Minister of Melaka, he aimed to recreate an extensive network of culture and business across the Malay World. The state of Melaka is facilitating this process by encouraging participation from various provincial governors in Indonesia and other countries including Sri Lanka, Brunei and Madagascar. Inviting international Malay communities to the annual convention in Melaka is considered particularly important to create a new Pan Malay network. The concept of the DMDI has been filtered through the Malaysian National Writers Association (GAPENA), which had been instrumental in creating the Malay World under the auspices of Mahatir. The deputy head of GAPENA²³, Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar, a Professor of Media

²³ For detailed activities of GAPENA, see Bakar (2002b).

Studies from the University of Malaya, and originally from Melaka, heads the social and cultural bureau of DMDI. He hopes to recreate a Greater Malaya network through DMDI programs. When I interviewed him in February 2002 in Melaka, he pointed out that Sumatran and Kalimantan Malays are Malay brothers, who have been placed in different nations due to colonisation. During the New Order period, attempts to unite Malay people across the border were seriously discouraged.²⁴ After the fall of Suharto, Provincial governors of Sumatra could respond to the initiative of the Chief Minister of Melaka. They collaborated with great enthusiasm to plan the cultural revival and flow-on business and political opportunities.

It is also important to note that establishing a successful business centre in the region is strongly in line with Malaysia's Vision 2020. Malaysia has been actively involved in the development of subregional economic activities such as the formation of a Southern Growth Triangle (Sijori) in 1989, Northern Growth Triangle in 1991, and East Asean Growth Triangle (EAGA-BIMP) in 1993. The development of subregional economic zones recently received much attention when leaders from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, met for the first time to boost a tri-partite growth triangle (*Bernama* 3 January 2006, Leaders' Presence to Boost IMT-GT Development). The population size in the proposed subregions assures lucrative markets, and sharing a Malay Islamic identity should facilitate the development of business networks.

Indonesia

Following the fall of Suharto in 1998, Pan-Malay identity resurfaced in various parts of the outer islands of Indonesia. This was triggered by the implementation of regional autonomy, which aims at transferring power in order to accelerate regional development. Local identity

²⁴ During an interview in February 2002, the former head of GAPENA (Malaysian National Writers Association) Prof. Dr Ismail Hussein, advised me that although the organisation was established in 1970, he did not receive much support from Sumatran counterparts during the New Order period.

politics have become major concerns for the culturally and economically marginalised regions.²⁵

People in Sumatra today openly criticise the Javanisation of the New Order period and believe that upholding a distinctive localised ethnicity, namely, Malayness, will assist in creating a new political centre, and offer more power to local politicians. Malizar Umar, a member of the West Sumatran Provincial Parliament is one example. A leading politician from the Minangkabau ethnic group, in 2000 he established an organisation called Movement of People Concerned About Malay Culture, held academic seminars, and Malay cultural festivals in 2002 and 2003. In our interview in April 2002, he stressed that ‘wider networks with Malay people are essential because Minang is a narrow local ethnicity’. This is one reason why collaborations with Malaysia and other Malay nations through the DMDI movement strongly appeal to Sumatrans. Because regional autonomy has extended the scope for business collaborations beyond national boundaries, Malay connections may provide a strong alternative to the prior Jakarta-centric network.²⁶

Another example is in the Sumatran city of Palembang, where residents state that they rarely obtained important government and business positions, even in their own city. This marginalisation, which was perceived to favour immigrants, led to the establishment of the Palembang Family Association (Kerukunan Keluarga Palembang, or KKP) in 1981. This

²⁵ I have analysed local identity politics in Indonesia after the fall of Suharto. See Sakai (2002 and 2003) for case studies from West Sumatra and South Sumatra.

²⁶ Interview with Bupati Bengkalis, on September 13 2005 in Melaka. Since the introduction of regional autonomy, Bengkalis has successfully undertaken various economic collaborations with Melaka. As part of this expansion, many Sumatran politicians talk about making their constituency the centre of Malay cultures (Media Indonesia Online, Pekanbaru Bertekad Jadi Pusat Budaya Melayu. 13 Juli 2005). The city of Tanjung Pinang of Riau Province also hopes to become the Malay Cultural Centre (Kompas, Senggarang jadi Pusat Budaya Melayu, 16 Juli 2004).

aimed to preserve the heritage of descendants of the Sultanate of Palembang, and was instrumental in the recent renovation of the Grand Mosque in Palembang City, which was attached to the Sultanate. Since 1999, they have been organising a mainly self-funded cultural festival. These Malay cultural festivals had not been previously performed in Palembang, although currently there is a significant increase in these events. Most are not government-sponsored projects, but rather grass-roots activity which seeks recognition from the local authority.

Philippines

The Malay World promoted by the DMDI offers opportunities for Muslim Filipinos to meet fellow Malay Muslims to rekindle their shared identity and to talk about future collaborations. Award giving ceremonies to local intellectuals, cultural figures, and politicians are a common feature of these events. DMDI plans include compiling a Tagalog and Indonesian/Malay dictionary to facilitate communication. One prominent personal example is that of Pax Magundadatu, a Muslim governor who has been serving his third term in Christian dominated Sultan Kudarat province, located in Mindanao Island. Although he does not speak Malay, he is committed to the idea of DMDI. He is also a key member representing the Filipino government in peace talks with the MILF established by the Arroyo government. The Province has benefited from his efforts in the peace talks through Filipino government funding for improvements including the construction of a provincial hospital (PIA News, Arroyo breaks ground for Sultan Kudarat P45-M provincial hospital, 11/23/2005). The economy of the Province is very weak and profile-raising is important in attracting future economic investors, for example through ties amongst the Malay Muslim business community. For the ethnic Malay community, the most important thing is not to disadvantage local Muslim traders. A Muslim scholar from Mindanao, and the former President of the Mindanao State University, Ahmed Alonto Jr., therefore criticises the

domination of non-Muslim traders in the area and strongly invites “Muslim brothers of one Malay stock” to invest in Mindanao (Alonto 1998).

The DMDI movement as an imagined Malay community

The DMDI holds an annual convention in Melaka while other workshops are organised in various places such as Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Thailand, and even in Sydney (2004). In Indonesia, annual workshops have been held in different Sumatran locations including Palembang (2001), Medan (2002), and Bukit Tinggi (2003). A workshop was planned for West Kalimantan Province in 2005 but was postponed because of political activity surrounding the Ambalat Island territorial dispute (*Pontianak Post*, 14 Maret 2005, Ketegangan Indonesia-Malaysia, Lokakarya DMDI ditunda).

In addition to those annual workshops, aspiring regions have organised cultural festivals. For instance, Bengkalis District of Riau Province organised a lavish festival combined with a meeting of Malay leaders in May 2005 (*Riau Pos*, 4 Mei 2005, Gubri: Melayu Jadi Kembang Bunga). As well, the new province of Bangka Belitung (Babel), which broke off from the mother province of South Sumatra in 2001, held a five-day festival in December 2003 and attracted large crowds. Although expensive, the governor believes that this event will generate future economic collaboration (*Kompas*, 19 Januari 2004, Bukan Sekadar Bikin Warga Senang). As a first step, an MOU was signed by two provinces agreeing to trade local commodities (*Kompas*, 19 Januari 2004, DMDI Tidak Sebatas Wacana).

The strong support for DMDI derives from the fact that these events are perfect venues to experience shared heritage and boost Malay morale. The festivals create instant media coverage, and meetings between politicians and officials usually lead to at least an exchange of MOUs and plans for future collaborations. The DMDI has numerous offices ranging

across economy, education, women, religion, tourism, youth, science and technology. Each office has a head who co-ordinates activities, and a list of resolutions has been published every year in the form of a report. There is no political section but a special meeting is organised for politicians and country representatives.

Sumatran participants have been enthusiastic about the development of DMDI programs since the beginning. However they are most critical about the current management which, according to a resolution at the Bukit Tinggi workshop in 2003, still appears to be controlled from Melaka in Malaysia. Operation plans are not clear to other members, nor are activities decided by all members.²⁷ It is obvious that the state of Melaka is achieving one of its goals to become the centre of the Malay world, and this is demonstrated by a huge increase in tourist and student numbers from Indonesia.²⁸ Indonesian participants still continue to hope that the DMDI will offer a venue for creating new networks as they do not have resources to do this regularly in Indonesia. The benefit of having opportunities for talks with fellow Sumatrans and other Malay communities is not to be ignored.

Conclusion

Pan-Malay identity is a vital agenda for many Malay politicians and communities in Insular Southeast Asia. The affinity based on shared cultural heritage is now seen as a tool to facilitate the creation of socio-economic and cultural networks through which the Malay people should raise their profile and compete, both culturally and economically (*Kompas*, 19 Januari 2004, *Bersatulah Bangsa Melayu*). The formation of active business networks

²⁷ Powerpoint presentations at the time of the concluding session.

²⁸ In 1999, only 12,000 Indonesians visited Melaka, while in November 2003 numbers reached 72,000 (*Kompas*, *DMDI Tidak Sebatas Wacana*, 19 Januari 2004) According to data presented at the 2005 DMDI conference, 100,694 Indonesians visited Melaka in 2004, ranking third following Singaporeans and Chinese.

through the DMDI is yet to be seen but emotional ties have definitely been strengthened.²⁹ The Boxing Day tsunami which hit areas including Aceh in northern Sumatra, southern Thailand and Sri Lanka, was a tragedy for the Malay communities. In one response to this, Melaka established an aid co-ordination centre in Medan and set up an orphanage equipped with a primary school for 100 Acehnese orphans.³⁰

The future development of the Pan-Malay network depends firstly on how all members can actively use it. Since the interest in reviving Malay cultures is becoming increasingly strong and evoking emotional attachment in Malay regions of Sumatra, Pan-Malayness is likely to remain as a key concept for regional development policies. For example, Riau Province of Indonesia now has a provincial development strategy known as Vision 2020 in which Riau Province plans to become the economic and cultural Malay centre in the region by 2020. In light of competition to become a new centre in the subregion across the Melaka Strait, local politicians in Indonesia and Malaysia are expected to look beyond Jakarta to collaborate with regional counterparts.³¹ The DMDI organisation should not necessarily be Melaka-centred. If the 'Malay stock' network becomes another centralistic hierarchy dominated by Melaka, the Malay communities in Indonesia and the Philippines will certainly be less interested in participating. Secondly, success depends on whether politicians of

²⁹ The idea of promoting handcrafts from Malay communities has materialised by setting up a DMDI shop. Currently Singapore and Melaka each have an outlet.

³⁰ Asrama Anak Yatim Stunami Melaka Aceh Indonesia is located at Jalan Muhajirin Matai'e, Banda Aceh. See Buletin SDMDI Sekretariat Dunia Melayu Dunia Islam Bil.1:2005.

³¹ For example, Singapore is an obvious economic counterpart for Sumatrans. The Sumatran Promotion Center was established by the initiatives of the Sumatran Provincial governors in Batam Island. The centre aims to promote investment opportunities for Singaporean businessmen who frequently visit the island for holidays and business (See Sakai and Morrell 2006).

various nations can assert pan-Malay identity as one of the main issues in undertaking social development projects throughout the diverse regions.

REFERENCES

The new Malay dilemma. 2006, 11 January. *The new Malay dilemma* from <http://www.geocities.com/benign0/agr-disagr/17-1-newmalay.html>.

2004, 25 September. Malays must live their lives with pride and dignity, says Abdullah, http://utusan.com.my/utusan/special.asp?pr=umno2004&y=2004&dt=0925&pub=umno2004&sec=News&pg=nu_33.htm.

Ahmed, Khurshid. 2005. Globalization: Islamic Perspectives, Challenges and Prospects. In *Poverty in Muslim Countries and the New International Economic Order*, edited by Munawar Iqbal and Habib Ahmed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Alonto, Ahmad E. 1998. The development of Muslim Mindanao function of the Serumpun Malayu Muslims surrounding Melaka Strait. In *Pertemuan Selat Melaka: ke arah merealisasikan Semangat ASEAN, IMS-GT, IMT-GT dan BIMP-EAGA*, edited by Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar. Melaka: Surya, pp. 155-186.

_____. 2005. Muslim Mindanao: the link of the Philippines to the Malay world. A paper presented at Hari Sastera XII, 2-4 September 2005, Ipoh, Perak.

_____. xxxx? The Filipino dream of a reunion with the Malay World. In *Alam Melayu*, edited by xxxx? xxxx?: Panitia Bidang Seminar Festival Budaya Melayu Sedunia 2003, Pemerintah Provinsi Riau, pp. 180-194.

Andaya, Leonard. 2004. The search for the 'Origins' of Melayu. In *Contesting Malayness: Malay identity across the boundaries*, edited by Timothy P. Barnard. Singapore: Singapore University Press, National University of Singapore.

- Azhar, Al. 1997. Malayness in Riau: The study and revitalization of identity. *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde* 153 (4): 764-773.
- Bahar, Saafoedin, and Mohammad Zulfan Tadjoeeddin. 2004. *Masih ada harapan: posisi sebuah etnik minoritas dalam hidup berbangsa dan bernegara*. Jakarta: Yayasan Sepuluh Agustus.
- Bakar, Abdul Latif Abu, ed. 2001. *Dunia Melayu dunia Islam: kesatuan dan perpaduan*. Melaka: Institut kajian Sejarah dan Patriotisme Malaysia.
- _____, ed. 2002a. *Dunia Melayu dunia Islam: belia dalam pembangunan*. Melaka: Institut Kajian Sejarah dan Patriotisme Malaysia.
- Bakar, Abdul Latiff Abu. 2002b. *Ismail Hussein bersama Gapena: biografi & koleksi*. Kuala Lumpur: Jasos.
- Barnard, Timothy, P. 2004. *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- Blanchetti-Revelli, Lanfranco. 2003. Moro, Muslim, or Filipino? cultural citizenship as practice and process. In *Cultural citizenship in island Southeast Asia : nation and belonging in the hinterlands*, edited by Renato Rosaldo. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 44-75.
- Brown, David. 1988. From peripheral communities to ethnic nations: separatism in Southeast Asia. *Pacific Affairs* 61 (1): 51-77.
- Buletin. 2005. SDMDI Sekretariat Dunia Melayu Dunia Islam Bil. 1.
- Bulletin Lancang Kuning, Bulletin No. 2, Year 1, August-December 2000, Medan
- Crouch, Harold A. 1996. *Government and society in Malaysia. Asia, east by south*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

- Daniels, Timothy P. 1999. Imagining selves and inventing Festival Sriwijaya. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 30 (1): 38-53.
- Derks, Will. 1997. Malay identity work ? *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde* 153 (4): 699-716.
- Drake, Christine. 1989. *National Integration in Indonesia: Patterns and Policies*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Hooker, Virginia Matheson. 2000. *Writing a new society : social change through the novel in Malay*. *Southeast Asia publications series*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- _____. 2003. *A short history of Malaysia : linking east and west*. *Short history of Asia series*. Crows Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin.
- Horvatic, Patricia. 2003. The martyr and the mayor: on the politics of identity in the Southern Philippines. In *Cultural citizenship in island Southeast Asia : nation and belonging in the hinterlands*, edited by Renato Rosaldo. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 16-43.
- Islam, Syed Serajul. 1998. The Islamic independence movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines. *Asian Survey* 38 (5): 441-456.
- Kahin, Audrey. 1999. *Rebellion to integration : West Sumatra and the Indonesian polity, 1926-1998*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Kahn, Joel S. 1992. Class, ethnicity and diversity: some remarks on Malay culture in Malaysia. In *Fragmented vision : culture and politics in contemporary Malaysia*, edited by Joel S. Kahn and Francis Kok-Wah Loh. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp. vi, 325.
- Langenberg, Michael van. 1985. East Sumatra: accommodating an Indonesian nation within a Sumatran Residency. In *Regional dynamics of the Indonesian Revolution : unity from*

- diversity*, edited by Audrey Kahin. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 113-144.
- Lamry, Mohamed Salleh. 1996. Mereka yang terpinggir: Orang Melayu di Sumatera Utara. Penerbitan Institut Alam dan Tamadun Melayu Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Selangor.
- Liow, Joseph Chin Yong. 2005. *The politics of Indonesia-Malaysia relations : one kin, two nations*. 1st ed. *RoutledgeCurzon contemporary Southeast Asia series*; 2. New York: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Mackie, J. A. C., and Australian Institute of International Affairs. 1974. *Konfrontasi : the Indonesia-Malaysia dispute, 1963-1966*. Kuala Lumpur; New York: Published for the Australian Institute of International Affairs [by] Oxford University Press.
- McAmis, Robert Day. 2002. *Malay Muslims : the history and challenge of resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.
- Mohan, R. Vasundhara, Identity crisis of Sri Langkan Muslims. 1987. Dehli: Mittal Publications.
- Milner, Anthony Crothers. 1995. *The invention of politics in colonial Malaya : contesting nationalism and the expansion of the public sphere*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Poulgrain, Greg. 1998. *The genesis of konfrontasi : Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia, 1945-1965*. Bathurst [N.S.W.]: Crawford House Publishing.
- Reid, Anthony. 2004. Understanding Melayu (Malay) as a source of diverse modern identities. In *Contesting Malayness : Malay identity across boundaries*, edited by Timothy P. Barnard. Singapore: Singapore University Press, National University of Singapore, pp. 1-24.

- Saifuddin, Achmad Fedyani, and Zulyani Hidayah. 2001. Etnisitas dan proses politik: (re)konstruksi keMelayuan di Riau. In *Kebijakan kebudayaan di masa Orde Baru: laporan penelitian*, edited by Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kemasyarakatan dan Kebudayaan (Indonesia). Jakarta: Kerjasama Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kemasyarakatan dan Kebudayaan-LIPI dengan the Ford Foundation, pp. 557-586.
- Sakai, Minako. 2002. Registering the mainland: The formation of the province of the Bangka-Belitung (Babel). In *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia*, edited by Damien Kingsbury and Harry Aveling, London: RoutledgeCurzon, pp.189-200.
- _____. 2003. The Privatisation of Padang Cement Company: Regional identity and economic hegemony in the new era of decentralisation. In *Local power and politics in Indonesia: Decentralisation and democratisation*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp.148-163.
- Sakai, Minako and Elizabeth Morrell, 2006. ASAA paper details to be inserted.
- Salazar, Zeus, A. 1998. *The Malayan Connections, Ang Philipinas sa Dunia Malaya*. Lunsod Quezon: Palimbangaang Lahi.
- Sani, Rustam A. 1976. Melayu Raya as a malay 'nation of intent'. In *The nascent Malaysian society: developments, trends and problems*, edited by H.M. Dahlan. Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan antropologi dan sosiologi, University Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Sekretariat Dunia Melayu Dunia Islam. 2002. *Dunia Melayu dunia Islam di alaf baru*. Melaka: Sekretariat Dunia Melayu Dunia Islam.
- Shamsul. 2004. A history of an identity, an identity of a history: the idea and practice of 'Malayness' in Malaysia reconsidered. In *Contesting Malayness : Malay identity across boundaries*, edited by Timothy P. Barnard. Singapore: Singapore University Press, National University of Singapore, pp. 135-148.

- Soda, Naoki. 2000. Melayu Raya and Malaysia: exploring Greater Malay Concepts in Malaya. *The Setuaro Kobayashi Memorial Fund Kobayashi fellowship program, Research paper 1998*.
- Sussman, Gerald. 1983. Macapagal, the Sabah claim and Maphilindo: the politics of penetration. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 13 (2): 210-228.
- Sutjiatiningsih, Sri. 1999. Kepulauan Riau Pada masa Dollar. Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan kebudayaan RI.
- Taib, Muhammad. 1993. *Melayu Baru*. Cet. 1. ed. Kuala Lumpur: ITC Book Publisher.
- Wee, Vivienne. 2002. Ethno-nationalism in process: ethnicity, atavism and indigenism in Riau, Indonesia. *The Pacific Review* 15 (4): 497-516.