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The *Orang Melayu* and *Orang Jawa* in the ‘Lands Below the Winds’

Riwanto Tirtosudarmo

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with the historical development of two supposedly dominant ethnic groups: the Javanese in Indonesia and the Malay in Malaysia. Malaysia and Indonesia constitute the core of the Malay world. Through reading the relevant historical and contemporary literature, this essay attempts to shed some light on the overlapping histories of these two cultural identities since long before the arrival of the Europeans. The two were part of the same fluid ethnic community prior to the arrival of the Europeans in this 'land below the winds'. The contest among the Europeans to control the region resulted in the parcelling of the region into separated colonial states, transforming the previously fluid and shifting ethnic boundaries into more rigid and exclusive ethnic identities. In the process of nation-formation in Malaysia, Malay-ness was consciously manipulated by the colonial and post-colonial elites to define and formulate the Malaysian state and its ideology. The Javanese, on the other hand, though demographically constituting the majority group in Indonesia, paradoxically melded into the political background as the first generation of Indonesian leaders moved toward a more trans-ethnic nationalism – Indonesian civic nationalism. Indeed, when comparing 'ethnicity and its related issues' in Malaysia and Indonesia, fundamental differences in the trajectories of their 'national' histories and political developments should not be overlooked.

Riwanto Tirtosudarmo

Email: tirtosudarmo@yahoo.com
Research Centre for Society and Culture
Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI)

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Acronyms and Foreign Language Terms

Acronym/Term	Explanation (English)
<i>Bajau</i>	Sea gypsies
<i>Bangsa</i>	Nation/people, race, ethnicity, ethnics,
<i>Bumiputera</i>	Sons of the soil/indigenous sons
<i>Indonesia Raya</i>	Great Indonesia
<i>Java-sabrang nexus</i>	Java-Outer Islands nexus
<i>Kebudayaan</i>	Culture
<i>ke-Indonesia-an</i>	Indonesian-ness
<i>ke-Malaysia-an</i>	Malaysian-ness
<i>ke-Melayuan</i>	Malayan-ness
<i>Konfrontasi</i>	Confrontation
<i>Melayu Raya</i>	Great Malay (group, identity, nation)
<i>MNP</i>	Malay National Party
<i>Negara</i>	State
<i>Nusantara</i>	Javanese version of the Malay world (in context)
<i>Orang Jawa</i>	The Javanese (people)
<i>Orang Jawi</i>	The Javanese (people)
<i>Orang Melayu</i>	The Malay (people)
<i>Partai Bersatu Sabah (PBS)</i>	United Sabah Party
<i>Pasisir/pesisir</i>	Coastline
<i>Tanah sabrang</i>	Outer Islands, the land beyond
<i>UMNO</i>	United Malays National Organisation

**The Orang Melayu and Orang Jawa in the 'Lands Below the Winds':
Notes on the Historical Imprints of the 'Civic-Ethnic' Distinction in
Indonesia and Malaysia**

By Riwanto Tirtosudarmo¹

1. Introduction

The 'lands below the winds' is a phrase found in Muhammad ibn Ibrahim's book: *The Ship of Sulaiman*, which details the presence of Persian traders in the eastern Indian ocean region in the seventeenth century (published in Persian in 1688, translated into English by J. O'Kane and published by Routledge and Kegan Paul in 1972). Anthony Reid borrowed the phrase in the title of his book: *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680* (Volume one: *The Lands Below the Winds*, 1988). This phrase connotes a vast area known also as the Malay world that is now generally referred to as Southeast Asia. According to Bastin and Benda (1968: v), the collective concept of "Southeast Asia" was long familiar in Chinese and Japanese usage as *Nanyang* and *Nampo* – or 'the region of the Southern Seas.' Apart from geographical proximity of the lands in this region, the overlapping histories of its peoples obviously has allowed for the creation of one interconnected region. While the history of contact between people in Asia before the arrival of the Europeans left its imprint on the region, it was European colonisation that profoundly transformed the region into something resembling its current form. The European colonisation that began in the fifteenth century, the decolonisation process initiated in the twentieth century, and the more recent era of 'nation-building' constitute the basis for more current developments in Southeast Asia.

This essay concerns two supposedly dominant ethnic groups: the *orang Melayu* (the Malay) in Malaysia and the *orang Jawa* (the Javanese) in Indonesia. Malaysia and Indonesia constitute the core of the Malay world. Through reading the relevant historical and contemporary literature, this essay attempts to shed some light on the overlapping histories of these two cultural identities since long before the arrival of the Europeans. What is more, the processes of decolonisation interestingly show the different routes of nation-formation followed in Indonesia and Malaysia. The 'civic-ethnic' distinction is strikingly reflected in the development of both Malaysian and Indonesian nationalism. In this context, ethnicity--a realm that evolved in the continuous waves of changes in the social and political spheres--has been conceived differently by the political elites and founding fathers of the Malaysian and Indonesian states. On the one hand, 'Malayness' has been conceived as a fundamental basis for state's ideology in Malaysia. On the other hand, 'Javaneseness' or membership in this dominant *ethnie* has been largely associated with notions of cultural traits that make this Indonesia's largest ethnic group potential political place in the prevailing 'civic nationalism' dwindles. In this paper, some insights hopefully can be drawn by examining what bearings past historical imprints might have on current political developments in Indonesia and Malaysia.

¹ This essay, presented at CRISE workshop in Bogor, Indonesia (2-3 August 2004) is a slightly revised version of a paper entitled 'The lands below the winds that is called the Malay World: Notes on some crossing points and beyond' presented at the International Symposium on 'Thinking Malayness', 19-21 June 2004, organised by Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, in Tokyo, Japan. I would like to thank Glenn Smith, Carole Faucher and Koji Miyazaki for their comments and corrections on the earlier version of the draft paper. The assistance of Rachel Diprose in editing this essay into a working paper is highly appreciated.

2. The *Orang Melayu* and *Orang Jawa* Prior to the Arrival of the Europeans

In a paper presented at a conference on ‘Java and the Java-Sea’ at Leiden University, in the Netherlands in June 1990, Ras (1992) exposed the interaction between the Malay and the Javanese during the Majapahit period around the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Through his reading of the various texts written during this time Ras, an expert on Javanese history, shows among other things, the Javacentric way of thinking of the presupposed Javanese rulers who conceived the ‘other islands’ outside Java as a *nusantara* - a Javanese version of the Malay world. The complex and intricate interaction between Java and Malaya before the arrival of the Europeans was explained in more detail by Houben (1992: 218):

“It is important to note that not only the ‘high culture’ of the Malayan Sea underwent and adapted many influences from Java and, in reverse, influences from the Malayan Sea and territories beyond were echoed in contemporary Javanese court literature: also in the oral traditions of many population groups outside Java, the theme of Java or Majapahit is a recurrent phenomenon”.

He further noted that:

“Nevertheless 1450 could be taken as the beginning of a new period, the ‘age of commerce’ as Reid (1988) has labelled it. In this period, maritime trade intensified concomitant with the rise of Islam. In the harbour towns of Central and East Java (Demak, Kudus, Japara, Pati, Lasem; Tuban, Gresik and Surabaya respectively) the leaders of the Muslim trading communities took over political power and expanded their influence both overseas and in the hinterland regions. It should be noted that the international character of maritime trade led to the creation of a mixed and heterogeneous population in the pasisir [sic]² cities. Consequently the word ‘Javanese’ is now used to mean ‘someone coming from Java’ (either of Javanese, Chinese, Indian or Arab descent or a mixture of it), rather than ‘someone of Javanese stock’. The pasisir [sic] area and its inhabitants were becoming well integrated within the cosmopolitan Malay-speaking coastal world”. (1992: 232)

According to Houben (1992: 234):

“...although overseas activities in this period were based on trade, economic domination could be expressed in political terms. The important difference with Majapahit times is that this *Java-sabrang* nexus [sic]³ was multilateral instead of bilateral because the pasisir [sic] coastal towns did not constitute a unity or coalition and instead of relations between one Javanese court and various overseas entities, we find relations between several Javanese ports and their overseas counterparts. Demak, for instance, had special links with Palembang and Banjarmasin, Gresik with Malacca, Lombok and other places. Trade and politics had become of a different order in the period after 1450”.

² This term is derived from the Malay/Indonesian term ‘pesisir’ which means ‘coastal’.

³ This term refers to the Java-Outer-islands nexus.

Unfortunately, as Houben has argued, things changed markedly in the seventeenth century (1992: 236): “From 1600 to 1646 Javanese maritime trade underwent a decline; from 1646 to 1680 it was gradually destroyed. This was caused by two factors: the activities of the Dutch East India Company and the rise of Mataram power over the *pasisir* [sic]. Both factors were characterised by strife”.

In the Java-Malaya nexus, Houben (1992: 238) outlined the important concept of ‘borrowing’, meaning that some specific elements of Javanese culture were borrowed to be implemented and play a role in local societies elsewhere. It should be noted, however, that the *pasisir* as a place of origin for influences in the *tanah sabrang* (outer islands, the land beyond) was far from homogenously Javanese in the period under consideration. Reid, for example, made a strong case for the ‘Chineseness’ of the Islamic ports on the north coast of Java. Other groups (Indian, Arabs, Malays) had settled there, bringing their ideas and values with them. In this respect it is striking that the Portuguese were the first to make a sharp distinction between Malays and Javanese (*Jaos* in Portuguese), whereas the Arabs before that (and the Malays in their wake) called all the inhabitants of the Archipelago ‘*Orang Jawi*’, making no distinction between the Malays and the Javanese. Houben (1992: 239-240) also observed that:

“Trade, politics and culture were linked to one another in the sense that the exchange of material goods implied the establishment of political relations and the transfer of elements of culture. Political relations were often framed in engagements of an unequal nature, which led to the sending embassies, tribute and, in the case of disloyalty, punitive fleets. Cultural transfer took the form of borrowing by the recipient of specific cultural elements, mostly regarded as a superior quality, thus adding to the authority of local customs. In many stories that were told around the Java Sea, the Javanese are connected with migration either directly from Java or through another place outside Java”.

In a similar vein, Adrian Vickers, in an article originally published in RIMA and then included in ‘Contesting Malayness’, outlined that “up until the late nineteenth century ‘Malay’ was a fluid category both for those who became ‘Malay’ and for Europeans. It was a category frequently combined with or used alternately with ‘Javanese’” (Vickers, 2004: 32-33). These two identities were terms in a complex of elements used to define the *pasisir* or coastal world of Southeast Asia. Their valences as meanings, however, depended as much on their usage by Europeans as on their relationships with each other. Vickers (2004) argued that ‘Malay’, like ‘Javanese’, has no essence, and particularly no national essence. ‘Malay’ is a hybrid identity formed by combinations of antipathies and interchanges predating the one-way street view of late nineteenth-century colonialism. Vickers (2004: 54) concluded that “...throughout the earlier period the key indigenous terms that dominated the formations of identity were *Melayu* and *Jawa*. These were not exclusive or separable terms. They were foci of what might be called a civilisation of the region...”

Flows and movements of various things become very important phenomena that significantly connect disparate places. Vickers (2004: 47) contends that:

“The situation is not one demarcated physical spaces of influence but rather of patterns of cultural overlap. These patterns go along with patterns of physical movement, movement of texts from one area to another, movements of wandering princes throughout the areas of the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Kalimantan and further a field, movements

of Bugis and Makassarese throughout Southeast Asia, particularly after the fall of Gowa-Makassar to the Dutch and Arung Palaka, movements of 'pirates' and 'mercenaries' (who were often the same people as princes), marriages across the waters, movement of the nomadic *bajau* or 'sea gypsies', and the numerous exchanges involved in the slave trade".

While Ras, Vickers and Houben view the interaction in 'the lands below the winds' as a generally a north-south affairs, van Dijk (1992: 291-292) took a different geographical approach:

"The spread of cultural influences may have been predominantly from west to east, but this does not preclude a dissemination of cultural traits in the opposite direction. The exploits of Buginese and Macassarese adventurers and sailors testify to that. After the fall of Macassar in 1669, they spread out over Southeast Asia, settling as far as Thailand. In their exodus they influenced political developments in a number of places and, of course, also brought their cultural heritage along".

Quoting Lineton (1975: 174-175), van Dijk argued that the Dutch occupation of Macassar caused:

"A wave of conquests and infiltrations of other Malay states in Borneo, the Riau archipelago, the Malay Peninsula and elsewhere by émigré Bugis princes and their followers. Their presence outside Sulawesi and the belligerent attitude they sometimes showed in their new settlements resulted in considerable trouble. At times, this only took the form of an abortive rebellion, as in Thailand; sometimes their political exploits were more successful, leaving an imprint on local customs and relations. The strong position they acquired in some states resulted in a special kind of a dualistic political structure: a formal paramount ruler originating from the local aristocracy and a 'junior' Buginese ruler who in fact could be more powerful".

Van Dijk (1992: 294-295) also noted that:

"It was by way of this third route that Islam spread to parts of the Philippines, from Johore at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, making these Philippine areas part of the 'Malayo-Muslim World' (Heidhuess 1983: 129). This cultural link between the Philippines and the rest of maritime Southeast Asia is an additional argument for looking at the area as a whole and not just at Indonesia in isolation, when investigating the relationship between sea traffic and common denominators".

3. *Melayu Raya/Indonesia Raya: Prelude to the Nation-State*

In the Malay world, particularly in the region under British control, according to Milner (1992: 55) "the geographic and ethnic scope of Malayness was an especially urgent

issue in a new state where loyalty to the bangsa⁴ [sic] had developed before loyalty to the nation". Milner (1992: 55) argued that:

"Narrowing the scope of Malayness appears to have been a cultural project even of the British colonial state. It is revealing that when the colonial civil servant, Sir Richard Winstedt, wrote what has been called the first modern history of the Malays he focussed on the Malays of the Malay Peninsula and the nearby Riau-Lingga archipelago (Winstedt, 1921: 4). This history was published in 1921 and contrasts sharply with a 'History of the Malay World' written by the Malay author, Abdul Hadi, a few years later. Hadi's broader survey – which refers to Java, Borneo and Sumatra under the heading of 'Malay lands' – seems like support for a pan-archipelagic *Melayu Raya*⁵ (Abdul Hadi bin Haji Hasan 1925-1929: 43)".

In the post-independence period numerous 'histories of Malaya' have followed the Winstedt model. They stress the Peninsula context of Malay history. They invariably highlight the empire of Malacca and then provide some account of the later and smaller sultanates such as Johore, Kedah, Perak and Trengganu in the region. Occasionally the 'Peninsula' scope is made absolutely explicit. According to the political historian Ibrahim Mahmood "the history of UMNO (the Malay political party which has always dominated the government of Malaya and Malaysia) is the history of the bangsa Melayu [sic], and the history of the bangsa Melayu [sic] is the history of Malaya itself" (1992: 55).⁷

Milner (1992: 57) also explained that:

"The Tunku's 'Malaysia' proposal, we might surmise, arose at least partly from awareness of this imbalance in sentiment between 'Malaya' and 'Melayu'. The use of the phrase 'Melayu Raya' in some early discussions of 'Malaysia' provides a hint of the possible ethnic aspirations addressed in the proposal. Where the Tunku's policy was especially innovative was in its reformulation of the 'Melayu Raya' to signify a Greater Malaydom focussed on Kuala Lumpur rather than a pan-Java Sea unity. The ethnic aspirations which the government both addressed and fostered were those of the Peninsula-based Malays, the heirs of Hang Tuah. In creating a Peninsula-Borneo 'Melayu-Raya' the Tunku was endorsing the narrower definition of Malayness. Under this definition the Javanese president of Indonesia could no longer be seen as a more authentic Malay figure than the Malay prime minister himself".

In a book that explains the genesis of the so-called '*Konfrontasi*' (confrontation) between Indonesia and Malaysia, Greg Poulgrain (1988) argued that the political intricacies of the inherent threat in early 1946, created by the links between Indonesia and Malaya, have not been fully explored by specialists on Indonesia or

⁴ The translation in this context for this term is 'people' or '*ethnie*'. In other contexts it can mean race or nation.

⁵ In this context, *Melayu Raya* is translated as Great Malay

⁶ In this context, the author of this paper sees the meaning of bangsa Melayu as meaning the Malaysian nation, and Malaysians as a cultural group.

⁷ Discussion and analyses of Malay nationalism and the birth of the Federation of Malaya are also elaborated in detail in several books, including Roff's: *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (1967) and Omar's: *Bangsa Melayu* (1993).

Malaya because, all too often, the subject has been delimited by colonial boundaries. In Borneo, for example, along the contiguous land-border between Indonesian and British territory, there was strong ethnic and cultural affiliation.⁸ However, there was an expressed willingness to share in the Indonesian revolution, spanning the Malacca Straits between the Malay Peninsula and East Sumatra, in addition to racial and cultural bonds. This revolutionary bonding and the threat it created for the British reached a climax in early 1946, when recolonisation of Malaya was already problematic. Nevertheless, as a result of deft action in East Sumatra, the British gained sufficient leeway and political leverage in Malaya to avoid the ignominy that the Netherlands faced when its colonial tenure was lost in revolution, and then prised from its grasp by American economic pressure (Poulgrain 1988: 23).⁹

Further confirming the argument of different historical trajectories in Indonesia and Malaysia, according to Poulgrain (1988: 23-24):

“At the end of World War II, there was an essential difference between the Indonesian polity and its Malayan counterpart. In Indonesia, the Japanese occupation bequeathed a revolutionary nationalist movement with tumultuous popular support; in Malaya, the wartime occupation and assistance had taken another course, determined largely by demographic differences and the enmity between Japanese and Chinese. In demographic terms, Chinese in Malaya in 1945 comprised a far higher proportion of the population than Chinese in Indonesia, in the order of 38 per cent compared to 2 per cent. Local resistance to the Japanese in wartime Malaya and Borneo was conducted mainly by Chinese, with Malay and British participation limited to exceptional individuals. On the other hand, those who collaborated with the Japanese included radical nationalist Malays, some of whom had been arrested by the British before the war. Sukarno and many prominent Indonesian nationalists who had suffered under the Dutch similarly collaborated out of necessity. In Malaya the anti-British component of nationalist ideology lacked political bonding with the Chinese inhabitants. Consequently, the MNP (Malay Nationalist Party) was deprived of Chinese support immediately after the war, when it was most crucial to form a united anticolonial front. This situation was not addressed by the MNP until late 1946, by which time Anglo-American relations and Malayan political priorities were clarified, favouring the British rather than the MNP”.

It is interesting, as shown by Poulgrain (1988: 45), how the ‘social revolution’ in East Sumatra in early March 1946 had strong repercussions for the fate and destiny of its neighbour, Malaya.

“With the sultans in East Sumatra deposed and many dead, the cultural affinity with Malaya ensured that the political implications there would be profound. In the early post war period, when American anticolonialism was a Damoclean sword over the British presence in

⁸ In the case of Sarawak (East Malaysia), an article by Ishikawa (2003) on the experienced of the villagers in the borderland of West Kalimantan and Sarawak during the early 1960s ‘confrontation period’ provides a good account of how macro level Southeast Asian politics closely interacts with everyday politics at the village level, again demonstrating the ‘historical crossing points’ between Indonesia and Malaysia.

⁹ See also Matthew Jones (2002).

Malaya, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) displaced the radicalism of the MNP, and so removed the precariousness of the British position. The demise of the sultans in East Sumatra drastically influenced their Malay counterparts, politically motivating them against the MNP. During March, UMNO emerged with the full support of the Malay sultans. The catastrophe which otherwise awaited their political inactivity was foreshadowed by the fate of their relatives in East Sumatra. By July, UMNO succeeded in obtaining an agreement with the British to begin negotiations for a new constitution. Negotiations continued from August to November, between British officials on the one hand, and the sultan's representatives and UMNO on the other, while the MNP was excluded".

In connection with the events surrounding the controversial birth of the Federation of Malaya, a paper by Soda (1988) - analysing the movement behind the idea of *Melayu Raya* through the life of its key proponent Ibrahim Yacoob - provides important insights for understanding this crucial moment in the history of Malaysia and Indonesia. In the conclusion of his paper, Soda argues that the idea of *Melayu Raya* or *Indonesia Raya* and that of Malaysia have some similarities. First, both ideas are based on a Greater Malay identity, which would not be confined within the Malay Peninsula but had to include the other territories in the Malay Archipelago. Second, both advocacy of *Melayu Raya* and that of Malaysia are always legitimized on the basis of an ethno-cultural affinity or primordial ties as well as common history. However, Soda also shows several differences between the concepts of *Melayu Raya* and Malaysia. First, while the idea of *Melayu Raya* covers the whole Malay Archipelago, the plan of Malaysia only involves the (former) British colonies. Second, the *Melayu Raya* concept partly consists of antagonism, though not extreme, against traditional political structure or 'feudalism' in Malaya. Third, while the intended *Melayu Raya* originally had an anti-British tendency, Malaysia was partly planned through peaceful negotiations with the British. Fourth, *Melayu Raya* is not so much a vision of state (*negara*) but a vision of nation (*bangsa*). On the contrary, Soda argued, Malaysia is more a vision of a state rather than a vision of a nation.

Bastin and Benda (1968: 174-75) describe the critical moment preceding the inception of Federation of Malaya:

"We saw that before the war nationalist agitation had for practical purposes been limited to members of the non aristocratic intelligentsia; now it suddenly found vigorous spokesmen and leaders among the British-educated upper class. Significantly, the creation of the United Malays National Organizations (UMNO) in 1946 was the handiwork of Dato Onn bin Ja'afar from Johore, the most independent and most viable of the former Unfederated States. The new movement forged a close political link between rulers and subjects never before achieved. It generated an excited Malay public opinion which, together with the surprising political apathy of the Malayan Union's Chinese and Indian would-be beneficiaries, led to Britain's abandonment of the radical Union scheme".

Bastin and Benda (ibid) argue that two years later the Federation of Malaya was born, which reflected a clear victory for Malay interests. The new constitutional arrangement largely reverted to the basic pattern of pre-war colonial rule and built on the supremacy of the individual Malay states (all of them entered the new Federation, which also contained the two Straits settlements, without Singapore). Malay rights and privileges were safeguarded, especially with regard to key issues such as land

ownership, citizenship, access to political offices, and for that matter the national language as well as religion. Islam was made the state religion, with adherents of other faith being guaranteed freedom of worship. As Basin and Benda highlight, the traditional rulers and sultans thus retained their prerogatives, while their English-educated descendants came to occupy positions of authority at the centre, which was being progressively decolonized. In August 1957, the Federation of Malaya, the West's last major dependency in Southeast Asia, attained independence in a peaceful transfer of power.

The pervasiveness of Malay ideology in the 'realpolitik' of Malaysia was clearly shown, as Shamsul (2004: 146-147) has argued:

“When the New Economic Policy was launched in 1971, *bumiputera*¹⁰ became an important ethnic category: it was officialised and became critical in the distribution of development benefits to poor people and also the entrepreneurial middle class. The *bumiputera*, the 'Malays' and their Muslim counterparts in Sarawak and Sabah, achieved political dominance throughout the country with one exception: in the 1980s the Christian Kadazan in Sabah formed their own opposition party (Parti Bersatu Sabah – PBS)¹¹ that ruled the state successfully for two electoral terms. During that period, the relationship between Sabah and the federal government could be described, at best, as tense”.

The expansionist and opportunistic character of the Malay ideology is further noted by Shamsul in his observation on the election in Sabah:

‘In an attempt to win back Sabah, the leading party in the federal government, UMNO (the United Malays Nationalist Organisation), made a historic decision in the late 1980s when it opened itself to non-Muslim *bumiputera* so that eventually the UMNO-led Barisan Nasional ('National Front') could regain control over Sabah. These development show that the need to define the borders and margins of a concept can have far-reaching effects on its central content: 'Malayness' as defined by the Malay nationalist movement in the 1920s and 1930s and implemented and redefined by UMNO, had to be reformulated in Sabah once again, illustrating how flexible the concept or category of 'Malay' is. It also shows that the ongoing discussions about 'Malayness' are at once both important and irrelevant: the concept can easily shift meaning, adapting itself time and again to new situation and making clear-cut statements impossible or incredible’.

In Malaysia, the fragility of racial and religious coexistence is, apparently, one of the issues that will be addressed by the so-called Vision 2020 proposed by the Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohammad in 1991 where the achievement of a *Bangsa Malaysia* is emphasized. Virginia Hooker (2004: 161) however, highlighted the critical problem in understanding what is meant by *Bangsa Malaysia* as most dictionaries of Malay translate the word '*bangsa*' as 'race' and it is in this sense that it is used to describe the *Bangsa Melayu*, the Malay race. In the phrase *Bangsa Malaysia*, however, there seems to be a new element in the meaning of *bangsa* the adding of a sense of 'nation' to that of 'race'. Shamsul (2004: 145) has indicated, the

¹⁰ *Bumiputera* in this context translates as sons of the soil.

¹¹ PBS translates as the Unified Sabah Party

Malay is fundamentally a colonial construction; “After the establishment of the Straits Settlements in 1824, Raffles’ concept of ‘Malay nation’ gradually became ‘Malay race’, an identity that was accepted by both the colonial power and the Malays themselves, primarily as the result of the growing presence of others whose ‘race’ was ‘European’ or ‘Chinese’. With the increased immigration of Chinese and Indian labourers to British Malaya in the early 1900s, a plural society was created in which the concept of Malay as a race became fixed and indelible”. From Shamsul’s explanation it is clear that demography, immigration particularly, has played an important role in the construction of ‘Malayness’ in Malaysia.

Reassertion of the implications of ethno-demographic configurations in Malaysia’s pluralism is also addressed by Abdul Rahman Embong (2001: 60) who argued that:

“Malaysian pluralism in all its dimensions – ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural, and others – was largely shaped during the colonial period, although it has roots in the pre-colonial period as well. Ethnic pluralism in contemporary Malaysia is now characterized not only by the existence of the various well-recognized ethnic groups – Malays, Chinese, Indians, Iban, Kadazan, and ethnic minorities such as Orang Asli and the Siamese – but also of less recognized, and some-time even clandestine, Indonesian migrants. Reflecting the contradictory processes of convergence and divergence, Malaysian pluralism has no doubt been a source of tensions and conflict in the society; it remains a force for change today. The ongoing process of trans-national migration, for example, is likely to have an impact on Malaysian society, a fact that indicates that Malaysian pluralism is being redefined even by forces operating beyond the borders of the nation-state”.¹²

However, as Hooker argued (2004: 161-162) “The rhetoric of Vision 2020 – put forward by Dr. Mahathir - has yet to be proved in practice. It will require an enormous effort to replace the difference-driven discourse of *Melayu* with a new kind of rhetoric which constructs and sustains commonalities so that the concept of the Malaysian race/nation gains credibility and becomes a focus for national loyalty”. The embedded problems originating from the ethno-demographic divisiveness that has constantly haunted the current political system and the future of the construction of the nation undoubtedly has been and will be one of the major contentious issues in Malaysia.¹³

4. Two Nations, Different Paths, One ‘Malay’ World

Studies of the Malay world or ‘the lands below the winds’ as a unified whole is nothing new, particularly as the region has become known as Southeast Asia. In 1968, for example, two historians John Bastin and Harry J. Benda published ‘A History of Modern Southeast Asia’ that places Southeast Asia into ‘a broadly comparative frame of reference’. Three decades after Bastin and Benda published their book, Benedict Anderson published ‘The Spectre of Comparisons’ (1998), outlining new perspectives in the study of modern Southeast Asian history that

¹² The importance of immigration to Malaysian society has been a rich topic in migration studies in Malaysia. Some studies which focus specifically on the Indonesian migrants are Shamsul Bahrain (1967), Radcliffe (1968), Tamrin (1987), Abdullah (1993), Kassim (1997, 2000), and Miyazaki (2000).

¹³ The polemics and analyses of Malaysian scholars concerning historical precedence and the future of their ‘nation’ can be read, among others, in Shamsul (1996) and Omar (2004).

construes this region as an integrated geographical space. While there are many views about what constitutes the Malay world, my own view in this perplexing issue is simple. I perceive it as a socio-geographical space in which a loose interconnectedness that has occurred throughout history has made such disparate spaces converge into a more or less integrated realm.

It is in such an integrated realm of the Malay world that I discuss the Indonesia-Malaysia complex interfaces in which the notion of 'crossing points' occurs between these two nations. The term 'crossing points' can be loosely defined as sporadic but critical moments in the process of interaction that has influenced not only the construction of '*ke-Melayuan*' (Malayan-ness), '*ke-Malaysia-an*' (Malaysian-ness) and '*ke-Indonesia-an*' (Indonesian-ness), but also the shape of the region as a whole that is called the Malay world. I should admit my bias in focusing only on Indonesia and Malaysia (particularly West Malaysia or the Malay peninsula) in this paper, where in fact we should also not ignore the important contribution of other communities and states in the discussion of the Malay world, particularly Singapore, Brunei, East Malaysia (Sarawak and Sabah), as well as Thailand and the Philippines.

In imagining the 'lands below the winds', perhaps it is difficult to ignore the prevailing geographical fact that today we recognise it as Indonesia and Malaysia - two countries representing the core of the 'Malay world', an 'enigmatic term' according to Barnard and Meier (2004). Indonesia and Malaysia are two nation-states that partly emerged as the result of the process of decolonisation which occurred in the aftermath of World War II. Although Indonesia and Malaysia underwent a different path in achieving their independence, at present they are enjoying equal position as sovereign nation-states and members of the United Nations. As close neighbours, Indonesia and Malaysia have shared many experiences during the course of history. In these shared and in some instances overlapping experiences, the notion of 'Malay-ness' often emerged in the form of converging and diverging views from both sides. When it comes to the notion of 'Malayness', however, the Malaysians are much more assertive than the Indonesians.¹⁴

The reason why Malaysians have been more active in advancing various ideas related to their '*ke-Melayu-an*' than Indonesians is perhaps related to the fact that in Indonesia '*ke-Melayu-an*' has been conflated with '*kebudayaan*' (culture). In Indonesia, particularly during the Suharto's regime, '*kebudayaan*' has been confined to such limited areas as arts, customs, literatures or tourism, in which the political and ideological elements have been eliminated or censored. '*Melayu*' or '*ke-Melayu-an*' in Indonesia therefore has limited meaning and does not enjoy the central place it has in Malaysia. Anthony Reid (2004), in a broader discussion on 'Understanding *Melayu* (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities', has shown the different paths between Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, and how it was only in Malaysia that 'Malay-ness' retained its 'core *ethnie*' and became a significant factor in Malay nationalism and later on in Malaysia's state ideology.

¹⁴ Lately, interest in 'Malay-ness' and what it means to be *Melayu* seems to be reviving in Indonesia. The collapse of Suharto's New Order regime apparently has also been followed by increasing political demands by various groups in the society, among others as away of ethnic mobilisation, which was suppressed previously. Yet, as Faucher (In Press) noted in her study of recent local politics in Riau islands, 'the revival of ethnic sentiments can be understood as the reconfiguration of a power structure that had already been operative under the former regime'. The marginal position of the Malay *vis a vis* the dominant major ethnic group namely the Javanese is clearly indicated by one of her informants who lives in 'Kampung Melayu', in Batam, Riau: "We are Malay, not Javanese, and we should be also Malaysian. We all hope that, one day, Riau will be part of Malaysia again". See also Dedi Adhuri and Laksmi's research report on Riau for CRISE.

Having spent a great deal of time in this paper examining the concept of Malay identity and history, it is perhaps time to also examine the 'other': the Javanese. In contrast to the Malay and Malayness that has been a fundamental basis for Malay ideology and Malay nationalism in Malaysia, the Javanese and Javanese-ness, interestingly enough have barely withstood the onslaught of Indonesian civic nationalism. Although the Javanese people are supposedly the largest ethnic group in comparison with the other ethnic groups, Javanese and Javanese-ness have failed to become the fundamental bases for Indonesian nationalism. Indonesian nationalism emerged apart from its anti-Dutch colonialism, which also reflects a strong rejection of the idea of nationalism as a simple derivative of Javanese-ness.

The explanation as to why the Javanese failed to assert their political identity should be sought in the history of nationalism in Indonesia which began to emerge in the dawn of the twentieth century. The first generation of Javanese intellectuals that were the product of the Dutch educational system began to imagine what sort of future political community would suit the indigenous people in the archipelago. Here I would like to cite the debate between two Javanese intellectuals, namely Tjipto Mangoenkoesomo – who advocated Indies nationalism - and Soetatmo Soriokoesomo – who advocated Javanese nationalism. This debate – in Dutch not Javanese or Malay – took place in 1918, the same year in which the Volksraad (People's Council) was founded by the Dutch.¹⁵

In this debate, Soetatmo advocated Javanese nationalism, arguing that the nation could and should be built on the basis of common culture and language. Javanese nationalism had its basis in the common culture, language and history of the Javanese, whereas the cultural bases of Indies nationalism were nonexistent or, at best, a product of Dutch colonial rule. Javanese nationalism was the means of self-expression for the Javanese, while the Indies nationalism was no more than a reaction to Dutch colonial domination of the Indies. Therefore, he argued, only Javanese nationalism had the sound cultural basis on which the Javanese could establish their future political community.

In reaction to this argument of Soetatmo, Tjipto defended Indies nationalism. In his opinion, what was totally lacking in Soetatmo's view was world historical development. He argued that Europe was clearly more advanced than Asia, and therefore the Javanese could learn from the European historical experience the direction in which the national formation in the Indies would go. The Indies were indeed composed of diverse ethnic groups, with each ethnic group having a different culture and language, but Java had lost its sovereignty and was only a part of the Dutch-dominated Indies. The fatherland of the Javanese was no longer Java but the Indies, and the task of the national leaders was to work for Indies nationalism.

In the end, after a long process of negotiation and conflicts, Indies nationalism more or less prevailed as the new form of 'Indonesian nationalism.' Yet, Javanese-ness did not fade away, but instead contributed – in some instances through elite manipulation - to contemporary Indonesian politics. John Pemberton's lucid analysis on the reinvention of 'Java' examines this trend under Suharto's New Order regime in his book 'On The Subject of Java' (1994). Indeed, the Javanese as an ethnic group have a different faith - in comparison to the Malay in Malaysia - as Indonesia's founding fathers decided to transcend ethnic loyalty by promoting a new trans-ethnic loyalty.

¹⁵ See Takashi Shirasishi (1981).

Indonesia was born with the commitment of its leaders to transform ethnic and communal identities into a national identity based on the 'imagined community'. The 'imagined community' is a term coined by Benedict Anderson, in which he defines a nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1991: 6-7). According to Anderson (Ibid), "...it is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". The nation, according to Anderson, is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. Finally, "...it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Ibid).

The case of Indonesia, according to Anderson (1991: 120-121) affords a fascinating illustration of the process of 'constructing nationalism', not least because of its enormous size, huge population (even in colonial times), geographical fragmentation (about 3,000 islands), religious variation (Muslims, Buddhists, Catholics, assorted Protestants, Hindu-Balinese, and 'animist'), and ethno-linguistic diversity (well over 100 distinct groups). Furthermore, as its hybrid pseudo-Hellenic name suggests, its stretch does not remotely correspond to any political domain; on the contrary, at least until General Suharto's brutal invasion of ex-Portuguese East Timor in 1975, its boundaries have been those left behind by the last Dutch conquests (c. 1910). Interestingly, some of the peoples of eastern Sumatra are not only physically close to the populations of the western littoral of the Malay Peninsula across the narrow Straits of Malacca, but they are ethnically related, understand each other's speech, and share the same religion. Yet, these same Sumatrans neither share mother-tongue, ethnicity, nor religion with the Ambonese, located on islands thousands of miles away to the east. Fascinatingly, during this century they have come to understand the Ambonese as fellow-Indonesians and the Malay as foreigner.

Anderson (1991: 133) argued that language has played a crucial role in the invention of nationalism in Indonesia, as he said "much of the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarities*". In this regard, two other institutions have significantly contributed on how language has invested in nationalism: print media (newspaper) and education. 'Indonesia' is survived as a 'nation' because 'Batavia' (as well as Jakarta) remained the educational apex to the end, but also because colonial administrative policy did not rusticate educated Sundanese to the 'Sundalands', or Batak to their place of origin in the highland of North Sumatra. Virtually all the major ethno-linguistic groups were, by the end of the colonial period, accustomed to the idea that there was an archipelagic stage on which they had parts to play.

5. Conclusion

This paper is concerned with the development of two supposedly dominant ethnic groups: the Javanese in Indonesia and the Malay in Malaysia. The two were part of the same fluid ethnic community until the arrival of the Europeans in this 'land below the winds'. The contest among the Europeans to control the region resulted in the parcelling of the region into separated colonial states, transforming the previously fluid and shifting ethnic boundaries into more rigid and exclusive ethnic identities. As the paper has outlined, in the process of nation-formation in Malaysia, Malay-ness was consciously manipulated by the colonial and post-colonial elites to define and formulate the Malaysian state and its ideology. The Javanese, on the other hand,

though demographically constituting the majority group in Indonesia, paradoxically melded into the political background as the first generation of Indonesian leaders moved toward a more trans-ethnic nationalism – Indonesian civic nationalism. Indeed, when comparing ‘ethnicity and its related issues’ in Malaysia and Indonesia, fundamental differences in the trajectories of their ‘national’ histories and political developments should not be overlooked.

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