The Formation and Management of Political Identities: Indonesia and Malaysia Compared

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Abstract

In this paper, I examine the processes of identity formation in Indonesia and Malaysia and the strategies undertaken by the respective states to 'manage' the influence of identity politics on the national political arena. I argue that in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, the processes of identity formation in the two countries were broadly concurrent, driven mainly by the adoption of Islam across much of the region, the intrusion of colonial markets and, in the late colonial period, the contradictory tensions aroused by colonial administration. In the post-colonial period, however, I identify a marked difference in trajectory. In Indonesia, from independence until the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, both the Sukarno and Suharto regimes had sought to suppress horizontal forms of identity through the hegemonic promotion of a sense of Indonesian-ness and a varying degree of political authoritarianism. In contrast, the Malaysian state has sought to nullify the conflictual aspects of identity politics by affording them a central place in the political structure through a form of 'authoritarian consociationalism'.

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By Graham K. Brown[2]

1. Introduction

This paper is divided in to three broad sections. In the first two sections, it traces the emergence and development of 'horizontal identities' in Indonesia and Malaysia[3] in, respectively, the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Its ambit is both historical and analytical, seeking both to identify factors and processes in identity formation that are historically specific, such as the particular regional experiences of colonialism and war, and to extrapolate a more general argument about the processes of identity politics. The third section, focussing on the post-colonial period, and taking a more strictly comparative approach, it examines the ways in which the independent Indonesian and Malaysian states have sought to manage identity politics.

In the first two sections, I take an approach broadly similar to that of Ben Anderson's (1991) concept of 'imagined communities'. I argue that in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, the processes of identity formation in the two countries were broadly concurrent, driven mainly by the adoption of Islam across much of the region, the intrusion of colonial markets and, in the late colonial period, the contradictory tensions aroused by colonial administration. In the third section, focussing on the post-colonial period, however, I identify a marked difference in trajectory. In Indonesia, from independence until the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, both the Sukarno and Suharto regimes had sought to suppress horizontal forms of identity through the hegemonic promotion of a sense of Indonesian-ness and a varying degree of political authoritarianism. In contrast, the Malaysian state has sought to nullify the conflictual aspects of identity politics by affording them a central place in the political structure through a form of 'authoritarian consociationalism'.

1.1. Horizontal and Vertical Identities

The term horizontal identities is used here in a similar way to modern constructivist definitions of ethnicity as a commonly held sense of group association based on a relatively (but not completely) flexible set of social, cultural or religious markers. I prefer the term horizontal identities over ethnicity for two reasons. Firstly, while modern definitions of ethnicity encompass a broad set of social characteristics, there remains some confusion over how exactly these criteria should be applied and which particular characteristics are 'necessary' or 'sufficient' to define an ethnic group. Is a group identity based principally on a shared religion, for instance, an 'ethnic' identity? Or is ethnicity to be defined in purely linguistic terms, as is implicitly done in quantitative models that employ the Ethno-Linguistic Fragmentation index (e.g. Collier and Hoeffler 2001)? By using the general term horizontal identities, which

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[3] In this paper, I have sometimes used the terms Indonesia and Malaysia for admittedly anachronistic convenience to designate the pre-independence areas that were later to adopt these names.

encompasses both 'ethnic' and 'religious' identities, I hope to avoid such confusion. As Ratcliffe (1994: 6) notes, a formulation such as this can be problematic in that allows for the definition of 'almost limitless' identity groups, 'without regard to the significance of the delineating factors'. Instead of viewing this as problematic, however, it can arguably be turned to our advantage, through the key question of political salience. Asking why certain group distinctions gain or lose political salience at certain times may provide an important avenue for understanding the dynamics of the societies in question.

A second reason for preferring the term horizontal identities is that it makes for an analytically useful pairing with a concept of 'vertical identity': a sense of individual or group identity based not on a set of cultural characteristics but on a hierarchical position within that society. This distinction between vertical and horizontal identities draws considerably from Horowitz's (1985) typology of 'ranked' and 'unranked' ethnic systems, but is more flexible in the way that such identities can overlap or co-exist. Thus, for instance, 'working class consciousness' would be an example of 'pure' vertical identification, whilst the Indian caste system is the obvious example of an intermingling of horizontal and vertical identities.

2. Pre-Colonial Period

Prior to the arrival of Islam in around the fifteenth century, political formations in Southeast Asia were characterised by the 'mandala' or, particularly in the Malay world, 'negara' polity – a political centre which exerted varying degrees of control over a loose and amorphous geographical area, often in the form of tributary relationships (e.g. Geertz 1980; Reynolds 1995; Wolters 1999). Nothing akin to a 'nation', or even a 'state', could be read into such structures; rulers across the region sought to legitimise and solidify their rule not by appealing to some ethnic or communal identity, but by claiming genealogical ties with great empires, past and present, often from far away lands. Balinese rulers as late as the nineteenth century sought to evoke and replicate the image of the great Javanese kingdom of Majapahit to bolster their rule; in the southwest Sumatran kingdom of Palembang, magical genealogies tied the royal line with no less than the emperor of China (Andaya 1993; Creese 2000; Geertz 1980). No court epic of the region was complete without a prolegomena detailing such ancestry, bestowing the king with the functions 'to link the past with the future and to give human life its appropriate place in the cosmic order' (Johns 1964: 93). Indeed, the Malay Annals (*Sejarah Melayu*) – in many ways the quintessential text of Malay identity – is more properly called the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, or Genealogy of Kings (Andaya 2001b). Pre-colonial political culture in Java and elsewhere in the region, then, was fundamentally vertical and hierarchical, with the ruler, who 'personifies the unity of society', as 'the core of the traditional polity' (Anderson 1990: 36), an ethos that found echoes as far away as the eastern archipelago kingdoms of Ambon (Bartels 1979).

For Benedict Anderson (1991: 36), the weakening of the 'great transcontinental sodalities' such as the Islamic *ummat* was one of the preconditions for the emergence of the 'imagined communities' of modern nationalism. Anderson, however, is primarily concerned with the emergence of that specific set of horizontal identities that formed modern nationalist movements, rather than horizontal identities *per se*. In the broader ambit of this paper, it will be argued that the adoption of Islam provided the basis for the emergence of horizontal identities in the region, albeit identities not as tightly defined and limited as Anderson's imagined communities. Whereas previous court religions had been syncretic and localised, the doctrinaire and textually based ontology of Islam, together with the religion's universalistic

aspirations and lack of hierarchical organisation, created the grounds for a sense of identity that was horizontal, rather than vertical.

Archaeological evidence, mostly in the form of tombstones, suggests that Muslim traders had reached Southeast Asia, including Java, as early as the eleventh century. Political formation at the time were characterised by considerable religious syncretism; in Majapahit the king was regarded as a union of Buddhist and Hindu gods; there is also suggestive evidence of Muslim courtiers (Ricklefs 1981: 17). The *Babad Tanah Jawi*, an epic account of the later Central Java kingdom of Mataram (1582-1749), synthesises Hindu and Muslim traditions in tracing the genealogy of its rulers (Johns 1964: 92).

It is unclear at what stage Islam was first adopted by local inhabitants, and this clearly varied from place to place, but royal inscriptions found in what is now the east coast Malaysian state of Terengganu extolling the observation of the Islamic religion have been dated to the fourteenth century. Lacking a priestly class, the spread of Islam was mediated primarily through merchants, 'accustomed to conducting their business under the protective umbrella of Muslim law' (Andaya 1999: 170). Indeed, given the absence of Islamic 'missionaries', in the sense of the Christian missionaries from Europe, it has been suggested that it was the existence of a coherent and comprehensive body of law relating to commercial transactions in the Islamic doctrines, along with the potential to improve trading relations with the Arab empires, that provided the first step in the local adoption of Islamic practices, rather than any 'spiritual' conversion (van Leur 1955; Wolters 1970). Perceived commercial benefits were thus major factors in the official adoption of Islam in the region.

At least initially, the arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia and its adoption by rulers did little to affect the vertical, ruler-centred structures of power and society in the region. As Milner (1983) notes, this may seem odd given the essentially non-hierarchical, community-based philosophy and organisation of Islam. Short of undermining central dominance, however, Milner argues that the particularly Persian tradition of Islam favoured at the time, with its emphasis on the Caliph as the 'Shadow of God on Earth', only lent further legitimacy to the rulers of Southeast Asia, many of whom were soon adopting such titles for themselves. Mystic Sufism also lent an additional aura of magic to the rulers. Moreover, the adoption of Islam was far from complete, creating heterodox interminglings of pre-existing beliefs and Islamic tenets, 'slippage' in Scott's (1977) terminology, the repercussions of which were still very much in evidence in the post-colonial period, as witnessed by the *santri-abangan* divide in Java (Geertz 1960). If Islamisation did not affect the rulers' position in the polity, however, other scholars have identified an important qualitative shift in the rulers' relationship with the ruled: no longer was the ruler a 'god-king', but the 'local head of the *ummat*' (Kathirithamby-Wells 1986: 342). Islam thus offered a source of horizontal identity that transcended kin-group, village, or even *negara.*

The relationship between trade, Islam and the emergence of horizontal identities in the region is best demonstrated through the experience of Melaka, the greatest Islamic empire of Southeast Asia and, for many contemporary Malays, the font of Malay identity. Following the arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia and the decline of Java as the hegemonic power in the region, the *entrepôt* state of Melaka assumed a dominant position in the fourteenth century. Melaka was founded at the turn of the fourteenth century by Parameswara, a Hindu-Buddhist prince from Sumatra apparently fleeing a punitive expedition by the Majapahit kingdom. Parameswara sought and received Chinese protection for his kingdom, which quickly developed into a major trading centre. Late in his reign Parameswara converted to Islam, again apparently for commercial motives, and thus created the first major Islamic royal

lineage in the region. Like other rulers, Parameswara had his own exalted genealogy – in this case no less that Iskander Dzu'l-Karnain, or Alexander the Great (Walker 2004). A notable difference between Melaka and previous *entrepôts* in the region was its more mercantilist or even 'free market' practices, in stark contrast to the 'administered trade' of previous kingdoms. In Melaka, 'the state existed there because of trade, not trade because of the state' (Thomaz 1993: 72).

In keeping with constructivist theories of group identity that situate it as a phenomenon of modernity, careful readings of Malay texts from the pre-colonial period have concluded that the term *Melayu* was originally not applied to an ethnic group identity, but was an elite identity applied only to those of royal blood (Matheson 1979).[4] The hegemonic position of the Melaka sultanate in the Malay world in the fifteenth century dialectically reinforced, and was itself legitimised by, this perception. If any group identity of 'Malayness' is to be surmised in this period, it was premised primarily on the notion of *kerajaan* – the condition of being a subject of the Sultan (Milner 1982; Milner 1995). This was epitomised by the 'social contract' of the Melaka sultanate, which was based upon the bestowment of virtually unlimited powers on the Sultan – he was even expressly endowed with the right to oppress his subjects – in return relatively paltry guarantees, a political culture of 'unquestioning loyalty' that reverberates today in Malay political discourse (cf. Chandra 1979; Kessler 1992).

The conquest of Melaka by the Portuguese in 1511 and the ensuing flight of its rulers to Johor marked the beginning of the demise of a hegemonic, Sultan-centred Malay identity. The merchant traders of Melaka spread across Southeast Asia, creating a new, diasporic Malay identity in places as diverse as Aceh, Siam and Cambodia (Reid 2001). The regicide of Sultan Mahmud of Johor in 1699, effectively ending the royal lineage that traced its origins to the Melaka Sultanate, fermented this upheaval. The rise of other Malay kingdoms, such as the Siak kingdom of Raja Kecik in Sumatra, and their attempts, resisted by the remnants of the Johor court, to portray themselves as Malay created a plurality of centres of Malayness: 'Johor could no longer claim exclusive rights to determine Malay identity' (Barnard 2001: 332). In Aceh too, new 'standards of Malayness' emerged, driven by an even closer adherence to Islamic doctrine and a proud history of resistance to Dutch colonialism (Andaya 2001a).

By the end of the eighteenth century, then, two interlinked but divergent aspects of Malay identity were thus established: 'a line of kingship acknowledging descent from Srivijaya and Melaka or Pagarruyung (Minangkabau), and a commercial diaspora that retained some of the customs, language and trade practices developed in the emporium of Melaka' (Reid 2001: 300-301). The decline of the Melaka-Johor hegemony undercut this first pillar of Malay identity, both in Siak and other areas on the Malay frontier, such as the northwest Sumatran kingdom of Barus, where overlapping rajadoms meant that 'the idea of a single ruler… [was] adapted to suit a particular local situation' (Drakard 1986: 57). Nonetheless, as we shall see later, the history, traditions and myths of the Melaka Sultanate retained an important position in the formulation and contestation of Malay identity, particularly in the Malay peninsular.

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[4] It is also worth noting that the modern Malay word for nobility – *bangsawan* – could be translated literally as 'a member of the *bangsa*' (i.e. nation), circumstantial evidence supporting the claim that the *bangsa Melayu* was an expression of a vertical as much as a horizontal relationship.

The arrival and adoption of Islam, although apparently spearheaded by the rulers to attract trade and bestow additional legitimacy to their position, thus provided a source of community identification within the region, albeit one based not on regional or geographic identities but on the universalistic Islamic *ummat*. The decline of hegemonic kingdoms, most notably Melaka, and the ensuing 'diasporisation' of trade contributed towards the emergence of nascent horizontal identities. Finally, contact with European civilisation helped create horizontal identities in the region. If nascent horizontal identities were evident on the eve of colonialism, however, it was European contact that determined the trajectory of identity development over the ensuing period.

3. Colonial Period

The experience of colonialism in island Southeast Asia promoted two further dynamics that drove the emergence and solidification of horizontal identities, which were in many ways contradictory. On the one hand, the trappings of modernity that came with colonial administration effectively contributed to the demarcation of ethnic boundaries through multiplistic legal systems, census classifications and, as colonial penetration progressed, the 'ethnic division of labour'. On the other hand, however, colonial administration created over wide swathes of the region created a common enemy against whom diverse groups could (though not always did) unite, thus forging some degree of horizontal identification. These contradictory impacts of colonialism – 'ethnic' versus 'national' identity – bedevilled the independence movements that emerged in the early twentieth century, and continue to resonate in contemporary Indonesia and Malaysia.

3.1. Early colonialism

From its earliest days, the Dutch VOC (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, or United East Indies Company) had implemented policies of ethnic segregation in Batavia, its headquarters and principle operating base in the region, on the site of what is now Jakarta. Founded in 1619, Batavia was by the 1650s divided into a walled city and the *Ommelanden* settlements outside the walls. Javanese and other indigenous groups were banned from the walled city, but were instead settled in segregated *kampong* in the Ommelanden, in a system akin to the concessions of Shanghai and other trading ports. Each *kampong* was headed by a *kapitan* who was the primary point of contact and control for the VOC administration (Raben 2000).

From the earliest days of Dutch contact in the region, then, the Europeans demonstrated a tendency towards classifying and categorising the non-European population. In Batavia, this was driven by military and economic concerns; elsewhere, political concerns were also apparent. In the Cirebon principality of West Java, for instance, Dutch reinforcement of nascent ethnic boundaries effectively isolated the *peranakan* – assimilated, Islamised Chinese – from their tradition role as political advisors to the Javanese royalty (Hoadley 1988). In any case, military, economic and political concerns amounted to pretty much the same thing for the VOC – expanding and monopolising trade.

The Dutch policy toward non-Europeans, and the Chinese in particular, met with drastic ramifications in 1740, when a relatively minor incident in Batavia led to a pogrom of the Chinese resident of Batavia, tacitly encouraged by the Governor-General, that claimed thousands of Chinese lives and drove the remainder of the community into an alliance with the rump of the pre-colonial Mataram kingdom in Java against the colonial administration in a war that further consolidated Dutch control on the island (Remmelink 1994).

Final Dutch control over all of Java was established at the conclusion of another failed uprising, the bloody Java War (1825-1830). The war was fought to resist the colonial government under the leadership of Diponegoro (sometimes referred to as Dipanegara), a Javanese noble with phenomenal charisma and millenarian appeal – the self-styled messianic *ratu adil* (just king) of Javanese mythology (Carey 1986; van der Kroef 1949). The importance of the war lay not just in its role in the establishment of colonial control over all of Java, but also in sowing the seeds of a future 'Javanese' identity. As we have seen, prior to the colonial period, Java was divided into competing or tributary kingships, which, although often syncretic in their culture and traditions, never established a cohesive Javanese identity. The millennial appeal of Dipanegara, with his emphasis on the establishment of an Islamic state, found resonance in a broad-based peasant movement that supported, funded and fought the war. As Peter Carey puts it: 'The coincidence to some extent of the social and economic grievances of the peasantry and the *kraton* [court] communities had enabled the most diverse social elements to find common ground in opposing the Dutch… The Java War thus throws light on the beginnings of Javanese self-awareness as a cohesive nation' (Carey 1976: 78).

The bloody first century of Dutch colonialism in Java thus drove the further emergence of horizontal identities, as resistance to the colonial power forged new allegiances and ambitions. M.C. Ricklefs' study of Java half way through this period, at the turn of the eighteenth century, is worth quoting at length:

> At the start of their close association, the VOC and the Javanese state were deeply ignorant of one another… The subsequent half century of misunderstandings, insults and betrayals merely served to entrench such stereotypes. Cultural identities appear to have drawn even further apart, differences to have become even more sharply defined… [T]here may have been a growing sense of Javaneseness as of consequence of the foreign intervention in Java in this period, one which was labelled Islamic but which in fact departed from abstract Islamic definitions… Yet this sense of Javaneseness, if indeed it was growing and displacing more provincial identities, appears still to have had regionalist aspects to it and did not, on the evidence available, attract universal endorsement.

> (Ricklefs 1993: 225)

As Dutch interests expanded beyond Java, so similar processes of commercial interest driving identity formation reoccurred across the archipelago, albeit not as contentiously as on Java. The virtually insatiable Dutch demand for gold and coffee at the turn of the nineteenth century, for instance, drove a commercial boom in the Minangkabau heartlands of Western Sumatra, where these commodities were abundant. Accompanying this boom was an Islamic revivalism in the region, driven by the demands for a 'mutually acceptable code of conduct' amongst indigenous groups exposed to expanding commercial horizons, and by the increasing wealth of the local elites, which allowed ever greater numbers to make the *hajj*, through which they increased their awareness of more orthodox Islamic norms and practices (Dobbin 1977). Thus, just as the consistent tenets of Islamic law had provided a prime motivation in the adoption of Islam prior to colonial period, so the commercial expansion of resource rich areas under colonial rule drove the strengthening of an Islamic identity in the region.

As was argued above, the late pre-colonial period in Malaya, as in some areas of the East Indies, saw the fragmentation of existing Sultan-centred vertical identities and

the emergence of a broad horizontal sense of Malay identity, driven on the one hand by the diasporisation of Malay traders and on the other by the increasing importance of Islam in cultural practices. If a general sense of Malayness had emerged by the eve of full British colonialism in the Malay peninsular, however, colonial documents from the period are replete with reports of deep suspicion and even hostility persisting between regional groups. In 1890, for instance, the Perak Annual Report noted that the Malays in the state had 'an exceeding dislike for and jealousy of all foreigners (including Malays not of Perak)' (quoted in Gullick 1989: 3). Similarly, Malay sayings common across the peninsula at the time apparently demonstrated regional antipathies, describing 'the men of Terengganu' as liars, those of Kelantan as 'thieves' and those of Pahang as 'arrogant' (Clifford 1897: 17). As we have seen, however, such apparently contradictory identities do not necessarily mean that one interpretation is 'wrong', rather than multiple and contradictory identities can coexist. As Milner (1982: 9) notes, vertical identity persisted into this period: 'Malays… considered themselves to be living not in so many states but under individual Rajas.' Milner's conclusions are supported by the reports of colonial officers, who described intra-Malay conflicts as due to their 'principle of tribal associations under chiefs' (McNair 1878: 202).

Thus far in this section, we have concentrated on Islam as the source of an emergent sense of horizontal identification in the region, but Islam was not the only game in town. In Malaya, the British policy of indirect rule through the Sultans meant that the position of Islam as the dominant religion, although they were wary of its political manifestations (Roff 1998). Elsewhere across the Malay archipelago, however, Christian missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, had considerable success in finding converts, often among the animist highlanders who had not yet converted to Islam. Yet while it may not be possible to doubt the religious zeal of the missionaries who courted converts, there is evidence that for the colonizers, the co-existence of Islam and Christianity, rather than the outright conversion of the entire population to Christianity, further served their political and economic purposes. This is most evident in the central Moluccas region of Ambon in the eastern archipelago, where a long history of colonialism by both the Portuguese and Dutch had resulted in substantial Catholic and Protestant conversions. Says Bartels (2001):

> The successive colonizers, Portuguese, Dutch, and Japanese, all tried to manipulate Moslems and Christians… [These] colonizers frequently succeeded with manipulation of the elites on the basis of religious affiliation, pitting Moslems against Christians.

The manipulation of horizontal identities based on religious doctrines in Ambon had lasting effects, which continue to resonate in the communal conflicts in Maluku today (e.g. van Klinken 2001). But religious differences were not the only legacy of colonialism. As the colonial powers brought in increasing numbers of migrants to work their economies, from within and without the region, modern ethnic identities were shaped and pitted against each other by the 'ethnic division of labour'.

3.2. 'High' Colonialism: The ethnic division of labour

As Ian Brown (1997: 160) notes, not just in Indonesia and Malaysia but across Southeast Asia, the colonial wave of immigration was marked by a 'strong correlation between an individual's ethnic origin and occupation' – correlations that extended beyond broad ethnic categories, such as Chinese or Indian, to 'sub'-categories, such as clan (Chinese language group) or caste (Mak 1993; Ramasamy 1984). In Malaysia, the word *ceti* (moneylender) derives from the name of the Indian Chettiar caste, which was predominant in that sector. This 'ethnic division of labour' is

arguably the most important legacy of colonial rule in Indonesia and Malaysia, and Southeast Asia more generally. Yet, as Brown (1997: 167) further comments, debate still rages over how far the colonial states were instrumental in 'creating, reinforcing, or perpetuating' this division – the choice of term here, Brown emphasises parenthetically, being 'extremely important'.

Key to the argument that colonial states were *active* agents in the ethnic division of labour is abundant evidence of racial stereotyping by colonial authorities and entrepreneurs, as epitomised by the following quotation from a European tin-miner in Malaya at the turn of the twentieth century:

> From a labour point of view, there are practically three races, the Malays (including the Javanese), the Chinese, and the Tamils (who are generally known as Klings). By nature, the Malay is an idler, the Chinaman is a thief, and the Kling is a drunkard, yet each in his own class of work is both cheap and efficient, when properly supervised.

> (C.G. Warnford-Lock, quoted in Hirschman 1986: 356-357)

Needless to say, such stereotypes were hardly realistic, or even consistent; in his account of Perak, John McNair, a colonial officer in the Straits Settlements at the end of the nineteenth century, described the Bugis population as comparing 'most favourably with the Malays', but also as 'not possessing their good points' (McNair 1878: 130 & 131).

The demonstrable existence of racial or ethnic stereotyping by colonial officials is not in itself sufficient evidence for the claim that racist ideology was the grounds for the ethnic division of labour (Hirschman 1986; Hirschman 1987); such an ideology could also be construed as a *post facto* justification of ethnic divisions for other purposes. Important here is the contribution of Collin Abraham, who argues that British labour recruitment policies in colonial Malaya were deliberately ethnically segmented 'to weaken the bargaining power of any one group' (Abraham 1997: 249). For Abraham, it was colonial practice that 'intensified and generalized' admittedly pre-existing ethnic stereotypes, which were then 'manipulated to serve the interests of the colonial powers', i.e. resource extraction and profit (Abraham 1983: 20). Thus, Abraham does not deny incipient 'racist' ideology among the colonial powers, but he sees it as a means to an end – effective labour control and the perpetuation of colonial dominance.

The promotion of ethnic segmentation in British Malaya was relatively low-key when compared to the Dutch East Indies. In Malaya, such segmentation was a matter of practices in labour recruitment and land rights allocations; in Indonesia, ethnic categorisation was given legal and constitutional status. In the Indonesian case, however, it is equally clear that the existence of ethnic stereotypes was not the driving force behind such classifications, but rather the justification for segregation imposed for primarily political and economic purposes. Fasseur (1994) links the development of a stratified ethnic system in the East Indies to the Dutch desire to impose a dualistic legal system, with European law for Dutch and, at least nominally, for Christianised 'natives', and traditional Indonesian law for all others – a system that soon necessitated constitutionally separate ethnic classifications. This judicial dualism, 'inspired by lofty discourses upon the responsibility of the government for good and speedy justice', was also driven by practical considerations: The Dutch simply did not have the human resources in the colony to staff a European-style justice system for its colonial subjects (Ibid: 33-34).

Economics factors were a driving force in the legal separation of ethnic identities. The first move towards ethnic classification came as part of the Cultuurstelsel (Cultivation System), a wide-ranging set of taxation and corvée regulations implemented after the Java War, which 'promoted the process of legal racial classification' (Ibid.: 33). Contained in article 109 of the 1854 Regeeringsreglement, which was later to be the focus of reformist campaigning by native Indonesians and Chinese alike, the first ethnic distinction was a binary one between Europeans (which nominally included Christian natives) and non-Europeans, the latter category of which included not just native 'Indonesians', but also Chinese, Japanese and Arabs. The creation of a subsequent third category of *Vreemde Oosterlingen* (Foreign Orientals), principally comprising the Chinese, was again at least partially driven by economic considerations as European merchants 'preferred to do business with Chinese trade partners on the basis of Dutch civil and commercial law' (Ibid.: 37).

3.3. The rise of Nationalism: Indonesia and Malaya in the early twentieth century

In both the East Indies and Malaya, the arrival of the twentieth century marked the beginning of a new period of nationalist mobilisation agitating for independence. In the East Indies, and Java in particular, the early years of the century saw the emergence of large nationalist organisations, first the short-lived Budi Utomo in 1908, followed in 1912 by Muhammadiyah, which today claims over twenty million members, and *Sarekat Islam* (SI, or Islamic Union), which collapsed in the 1920s, although its impact at the time was probably greater than Muhammadiyah. The rise of SI has been linked to 'a general awakening of the rural population' to its disadvantaged position in colonial Java (Kartodirdjo 1973: 143). Yet the focus its attention was not primarily Dutch rule – the first SI congress, held in 1913, applauded the Dutch and called only for self-governance within the Dutch empire (Vandenbosch 1931). Instead, it had its origins in specifically anti-Chinese agitation. Sarekat Islam was formed in 1911 under the name *Sarekat Dagang Islam* (Islamic Trade Union) as a trading cooperative established to counteract the dominance of Chinese traders in Java. As the organisation spread across Java, it was instrumental in fomenting widespread anti-Chinese riots. Econometric analysis of colonial records has shown a dramatic increase in Javanese-Chinese horizontal inequalities between 1910 and 1916, with greater inequalities in residencies which were to experience higher levels of ethnic violence under the auspices of SI (Chandra 2002). Such was its influence that in some areas it became 'virtually a shadow administration which the *priyayi* officials were obliged to accommodate' (Ricklefs 1981: 158). In the latter years of the 1910s, however, SI suffered an internal schism between Marxist-inclined leaders and those closer to Islamic orthodoxy and, by the early 1920s, had lost its mobilising vigour (von der Mehden 1958).

Java was the heart of the nationalism movement in colonial Indonesia, but the onset of the twentieth century saw the emergence of nationalist and ant-colonial movements across the region. Often these regional movements were in competition or even conflict with the Javanese movements, many of which attempted to project a hegemonic Javanese culture and identity across the colony's indigenous groups. In Sumatra, for instance, the student-based Jong Sumtranen Bond (JSB – Young Sumatrans' Union) sought to evoke a sense of Sumatran identity, while simultaneously cooperating with other student groups across the colony, including those in Java. In doing so, however, they consciously distanced themselves from Java-centric nationalisms that harked back to the re-imagined glory of the Majapahit days, and instead promulgated a Malay identity rooted in the Melaka dynasty (van Miert 1996). Similarly, in the Christianised Minahasa region of northern Sulawesi, strong regional identities meant that local nationalists were at best cautious of Java and the prospect of a united independent Indonesia. Indonesia was a 'problematic

option' and many Minahasan nationalists were all too willing to envisage independence 'with or without Indonesia' (Henley 1993: 112 & 109).

For the new nationalists attempting to rouse the East Indies population to agitate for independence, establishing the position of Islam within their new national identity was problematic. The prevalence of Islam across the Dutch territories made it attractive as a 'force that could be used to break down local patriotisms and help create national unity' (Vandenbosch 1952: 182). But with more than a million Hindus in Bali and two million Christians spread in pockets across the archipelago, Islam was also a potential divisor and, indeed, Christianized regions like Minahasa and Ambon were amongst those most nervous of the prospect of a single independent Indonesia. Moreover, many of the young PNI (*Parti Nasionalis Indonesia*, or Indonesian Nationalist Party) activists at the forefront of the struggle for independence were heavily influenced by Western notions of the secular state; in 1940, Sukarno wrote in the Muhammadiyah magazine *Pandji Islam* that an independent Indonesia faced a choice between 'the union of state and religion, but without democracy, or democracy, but the state separate from religion' (quoted in Feillard 1999: 21).[5] Such sentiment did not, however, prevent them from utilising Islam for mobilising purposes, when they deemed it appropriate – whilst at college in the 1920s, Sukarno had been instrumental in planning a giant mosque in Bandung that he envisaged would serve both as a symbol of Islam and of Indonesian nationalism.

In Malaya also, the first half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of Malay 'nationalism', predicated on the development of a Malay intelligentsia and disseminated through the ever-expanding number of Malay language newspapers, periodicals and fictional writing produced throughout the period (Hooker 2000; Roff 1994). In his classic study of the origins of Malay nationalism, Roff (1994) identifies three broad strands of Malay nationalism: the Islamic reformists, drawn largely from the increasing ranks of *haji* who had completed the pilgrimage to Mecca and had remained there, or at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, to study; Malay-educated radicals, many of them schoolteacher graduates of the Sultan Idris Training College; and the English-educated Malay aristocracy.

The emergence of a nationalist movement associated with a modernist, horizontal sense of Malay identity was shaped by the continuing transformation of the Malay sultanates, as they struggled to defend and maintain their position in the face of increasing British intervention in the region. In Johor at the turn of the twentieth century, for instance, the monarchy sought to redefine itself in considerably more Western, liberal terms, emphasising the contributions of the sultan to the welfare of the *rakyat* and adopting the conventions of a modern state rather than a mandala polity including, for the first time, the production of an official map (Milner 2003).

The relationship between Islamic identity and the nationalist movements in both the East Indies and Malaya was further complicated in the early decades of the century by the emergence of a broad ideological split in Islamists between the 'traditionalists' or 'old generation' (*kaum tua*) and the 'modernists' or 'reformists', the 'young generation' (*kaum muda*). The traditionalists represented the syncretic form of Islam that had developed in Java and elsewhere, mixing Islamic ideals and practices with existing structures, including *adat*. Modernist influences, which sought to promote a 'purified' Islam, had been growing since the eighteenth century, driven by improved

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[5] *Persatuan staat-agama, tetapi zonder demokrasi, atau demokrasi, tetapi staat dipisahkan dari agama* (translation mine).

transportation and networks of *ulama* who had studied in Mecca (Azra 2004). In the 1920s Dutch East Indies both these currents found mass organisational form after the collapse of SI, the traditionalists in the *Nadhlatul Ulama* (NU – Council of Islamic Scholars), the modernists in Muhammadiyah (Followers of Mohammad).[6] Initially both these organisations had a relatively benign relationship with the Dutch authorities – Muhammadiyah even receiving a government subsidy – but the relationships soon deteriorated, as agitation for independence increased Dutch hostility of indigenous organisation. Faced with the realisation that both currents of Indonesian Islam were there to stay and the hostility of the Dutch, the two organisations in 1937 moved to created a united front, the *Majlis Islam A'laa Indonesia* (MIAI, or Supreme Islamic Council of Indonesia). Short of inhibiting the nationalist movement, the modernist-traditionalist split in Islam across the region thus created a 'dynamic tension… thus creating a strong impulse for reform and change' (Means 1969: 273).

Through map, census, legal and economic separation and a discourse of racialism, colonial rule gave bureaucratic solidity to some forms of horizontal identities. At the same time, however, it inadvertently promoted other forms of identification that served as mobilising agents against imperialism. In many places, such identities crystallized under the banner of Islam, which both in the East Indies and Malaya was relatively insulated from colonial intervention. The arrival of Islam in the pre-colonial period had brought about a shift in the ruler-ruled relationship across much of the Malay world; experiences of displacement and exploitation under colonial rule saw Islam take an even more central place as an identity that offered a clear distinction between oppressor and oppressed, that broke the localistic boundaries of previous vertical allegiances, and, crucially for its role in protest and rebellion, that carried a narrative of hope by 'linking the seemingly weak and backward Muslims of Southeast Asia with the Caliph himself, who was popularly thought to be the most powerful ruler on earth' (Reid 1967).

3.4.   War and Occupation: Southeast Asia under Japanese Rule

During late 1941 and early 1942, Japanese forces swept across Southeast Asia in a 'sudden rampage' that saw Malaya, Singapore, Borneo and the Netherlands East Indies, along with Burma, Thailand and the Philippines, fall in quick succession to the advancing armies (Tarling 2001). While the occupation was to have decisive effects on political formations, it was the Japanese treatment of the Chinese communities, a legacy of the long hostilities between Japan and China, that had the most immediate effect on identities and ethnic relations in the territories under their control.

Japanese discrimination against Chinese was a common feature across its occupied territories, as was a legitimising discourse of indigenous (i.e. non-Chinese) 'liberation' from former colonial masters. The severity of this discrimination varied, however, with Malayan and Singaporean Chinese experiencing some of the worst repression, and Javanese Chinese experiencing relatively benign treatment (Clancey 2002; Elsbree 1953). The Chinese population in the territories that came to make up Malaysia in its initial form – Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and British North Borneo (Sabah) – experienced some of the harshest treatment by the Japanese occupiers. In Singapore, thousands of Chinese were summarily executed in the *sook ching* 'mass screening' immediately after the British surrender in 1942; after the war, the Japanese government acknowledged the number killed to be five thousand, other

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[6] As noted above, Muhammadiyah was formed in 1912, but only gained a strong following in the late 1920s (Palmer 1954).

sources place the figure as high as fifty or sixty thousand (Cheah 2002a: 110). Across Malaya, such 'screenings' continued throughout the occupation, although none came near the brutality of the Singapore massacre (Kratoska 1998: 93-103). In Borneo, Chinese resistance against the occupation was met with brutal force and the massacre of hundreds of resisters and sympathisers, notably in Api[7] and Pontianak (Fujio 2002; Maekawa 2002; Ooi 1999). In addition to physical brutality, the Chinese residents of Malaya and Singapore, as in most other parts of Southeast Asia, were subject to forced 'contributions' to the military administration, through the auspices of the Overseas Chinese Association (OCA), an organisation created by the Japanese to handle relations with the Chinese community.

In contrast to the Malayan experience, Japanese policy towards the Chinese population of the East Indies, particularly Java, was relatively conciliatory – even to the extent of cracking down on a wave of anti-Chinese violence that had broken out following the Dutch 'scorched earth' policy in the face of the Japanese conquest of the colony (Touwen-Bouwsma 2002). Heavy taxation of Chinese businesses was also practiced in Indonesia, but massacres such as those seen in Malaya were not evident. This relative tolerance extended both ways: Chinese resistance to the Japanese occupation was also markedly lower in Indonesia than Malaya (Kwartananda 2002). In the economic sphere, the Japanese encouraged the growth of an indigenous *pribumi* business class, but – in direct contrast to the Dutch – sought to integrate it within the economic activities of other ethnic groups, including the Chinese (Post 1997).

The Japanese occupation of Malaya has thus widely been credited with intensifying ethnic divisions within the country, as resistance to the occupation drove the popularity of the Communist movement, both its political manifestation in the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and its armed wing, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA): 'Repressive measures against the Chinese led to the formation of a Chinese-dominated resistance movement; the "pro-Malay" policy of the Japanese created an undercurrent of resentment and distrust among Chinese towards Malays' (Cheah 1981: 108). By the end of the occupation, serious ethnic conflicts had broken out, most notably in the southern state of Johor, which borders Singapore, where Malays attacks on Chinese in May 1945 – allegedly instigated by the Japanese – left thousands dead and displaced many thousands more (Cheah 2002a). The period of political chaos between the Japanese surrender in 1945 and the full re-establishment of British control exacerbated this, with outbreaks of explicitly ethnic conflict soon escalating into Malay-Chinese 'vendettas' and moves by the predominantly Chinese-based Malayan Communist Party to take over the country. For many Malays, this period cemented the perception that all Chinese were communists, and all communists Chinese (Cheah 1981). Despite the particular suffering of the Chinese population under the Japanese, however, it has been argued that Chinese experiences of Japanese occupation in Malaya in fact solidified their self-identification as 'Malayans' rather than 'Overseas Chinese'.   The harsh experiences of war and occupation, it is argued, gave the Chinese residents a sense of place, history and community *within* Southeast Asia and 'started them towards the transition from being sojourners to settlers' (Lim 2000: 155).

While Chinese residents across the region prior to the occupation viewed the prospect of Japanese occupation with almost universal trepidation and dread,

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[7] Api was the Japanese given to the settlement of Jesselton, later to become the capital of Sabah under the new name Kota Kinabalu.

indigenous groups in both colonies were considerably more divided on the issue. In Indonesia, nationalist groups had long seen Japan and a potential ally in their struggle against (Western) imperialism. The emergence of Japan as a world power following the Meiji restoration in 1869 had impressed on many native Indonesians the idea that Asian countries could achieve modernity on their own while retaining an innate 'Asian-ness'. As early as 1913, the Sultan's court in Riau had sent a high-ranking secret mission to Japan to petition for aid in resisting the Dutch (Andaya 1977). In the latter half of the 1920s, as a war in the Pacific appeared imminent, the PNI and Sukarno in particular increasingly saw Japan as a potential ally in their struggle, although concerns remained among other key nationalists, such as Hatta and Sjahrir, over its imperialist tendencies (Dahm 1969: esp. 109-119). Pre-war contacts between the Japanese and indigenous nationalists in Malaya had been limited to the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM – Young Malay Union) and its leader Ibrahim Yaacob, whose collaboration with the occupying forces at the head of the Malay-based *Giyū gun* (Volunteer Army), would later earn him condemnation, exile and the tag of traitor (Cheah 1979).

At the heart of indigenous collaboration with the Japanese was the issue of 'Pan-Asianism' and, in particular, the concept of Indonesia Raya (Greater Indonesia) – an envisaged independent nation that would comprise all the 'Malay' lands, including the Dutch East Indies, Malaya, North Borneo and, in some views, the separate Dutch territory of Papua and Portuguese East Timor. While discursive differences existed between Indonesian and Malayan proponents of Indonesia Raya, the former viewing it primarily in geo-political term, the latter more ethnically, both groups shared a common attraction to the Japanese (McIntyre 1973). The appeal was both strategic and, in terms of identity, ideological. Strategically, it was envisaged that the creation of an Indonesia Raya could arise more easily on the back of a 'united' Japanese occupation than the fragmented European administrations. As Sukarno put it, the Japanese occupation was 'a magnificent opportunity to educate and ready our people' (quoted in Reid 1974: 13).

As Touwen-Bouwsma (1997: 33) notes, historians of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific, like those of the colonial era, are divided over whether or not the Japanese imperial forces consciously employed a policy of 'divide and rule' towards ethnic groups in their occupied territories, or whether increased ethnic antagonism was an 'unforeseen outcome of their policy'. Evidence points both ways: as we have seen, the Japanese occupiers were active in putting down anti-Chinese riots in Java, yet were also apparently instrumental in encouraging the 1945 massacres in Johor. Certainly, Japanese policy in Indonesia appears to have been much closer to the rhetoric of interracial harmony and pan-Asianism that characterised the Japanese imperial discourse than it was in Malaya. In speculating why this was the case, it is worth noting that the Chinese in the Java constituted a considerably smaller proportion of the population than in Malaya and Singapore, and thus may have been seen as less of a threat to the Japanese occupation. In addition, the differing attitudes of the individual Japanese personnel in charge may have been a contributory factor. Watanabe Wataru, the head of the Japanese *gunsei* (military administration) in Malaya was exceptionally hard-line in his policy towards the occupied population, particularly the Chinese (Akashi 1970; Akashi 2002). The level of forced 'contributions' exacted on the Malayan Chinese by Watanabe was high enough to concern even the Japanese vice war minister; *gunsei* police chief Colonel Otani Keijiro later complained that it had been a 'propaganda windfall' for the MPAJA, which had 'legitimised their resistance' (quoted in Akashi 2002: 123). Such was the concern about Watanabe's stance in the Japanese military hierarchy that he was eventually reassigned away from Malaya, after which policy towards the Chinese was more moderate.

4. The Post-Colonial Period

4.1. Independence In Indonesia: Horizontal Identities Suppressed

As defeat in the Pacific loomed, the Japanese administration started to take its promise of independence for Indonesia more seriously, hoping that its role as the 'liberator' of an independent Indonesia might at least ensure it a regional ally. In March 1945 thus was formed the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence, comprising Sukarno, Hatta and other, mostly Javanese, leaders of their generation. The committee was immediately embroiled in the dispute over the role of Islam in the putative nation. Sukarno's proposed nationalist ideology based on 'five pillars' (*pancasila*) – nationalism, humanitarianism, democracy, social justice and belief in one God – was broadly acceptable to all, but modernist Islamic representatives, while accepting that a theocratic state was unrealistic, were concerned about the lack of a specific role for Islam. Annexed to the draft constitution was thus a compromise document – known as the Jakarta Charter – that guaranteed that the head of state would be a Muslim and required the government to ensure that Muslims follow Islamic law. In the end the Charter was dropped, but it has remained a rallying point for Islamist; as recently as 2000, demonstrations outside parliament calling for its inclusion in the constitution attracted thousands of participants (Bertrand 2004: 109).

On 17 August 1945, two days after the Japanese surrender, Sukarno and Hatta declared the unitary Republic of Indonesia an independent country and Indonesia entered another period of turmoil with a five year war of independence against the Dutch, against the Federation of Indonesia formed by the Dutch when it realised independence was inevitable, and against 'internal' rebellions in regions unwilling to accept the formation and proposed character of the Republic of Indonesia (e.g. Reid 1974). Religious identity was the main mobilising factor in many of these rebellions. In Ambon, where Christians had fought for the VOC against other indigenous groups centuries earlier, many Christian again sided with the Dutch against the Republic and, when its cause was lost, declared their own independent Republic of the South Moluccas (RMS – *Republik Maluku Selatan*). The RMS was quickly crushed, but its legacy remains in the region (Bartels 2001; Chauvel 1985). In Bali, concerns over the creation of Indonesia centred on the place of the predominantly Hindu island in the new, Muslim-dominated Indonesian state, with the status of polytheistic Hinduism in relation to the monotheistic national ideology of *pancasila* the central issue of contention. These concerns were complicated, however, by long-standing internal conflicts which had been exacerbated by the Japanese occupation. These internal conflicts, which were primarily economic and political contests between the remnants of the various kingdoms of the island, have thus been seen to have effectively hindered the emergence of an ethnically-based resistance to Indonesia. Says Geoffrey Robinson (1995: 183), 'the contentious religious issues were eventually resolved in Bali's favour, with the assistance of the central state, so that any emerging ethnic or regional sentiment against the center gave way again to political conflict among Balinese'. If Ambon and Bali were the site of concerns of Islamic dominance, other areas – the *Darul Islam* in West Java, Aceh, and South Sulawesi – saw rebellion against the new Republic because it was not Islamic enough.

Ethnicity rather than religion was also evident in resistance to the Republic, notably in the Malay heartlands in Sumatra and the Riau archipelago. In Sumatra, local ethnic elites, including Malay, Karo and Simalungun groups, established with Dutch backing the autonomous East Sumatran Nation (NST, or *Negara Sumatera Timur*). As we have already seen, nascent nationalism in pre-war Sumatra had been suspicious of Javanese hegemony; the NST formalised this with almost complete exclusion of Javanese, Chinese and other immigrant communities from its governing committee.

Increasing dominance of the Malay *kerajaan* elites within the NST, however, led to fragmentation within the local communities, and when the Dutch finally conceded sovereignty to the unitary Indonesian state, it was only the Malay elites that resisted incorporation (van Langenberg 1982). In the subsequent period, many ethnic groups in Sumatra that had previously found it convenient to identify themselves as Malay, a practice common amongst those who had migrated to the urban centre of Medan, sought to reassert their 'ancestral' ethnic identities in the context of a broader Indonesian nationalism (Bruner 1961). Similarly in Riau, local elites under the leadership of Major Raja Muhammad Yunus attempted to revive the Riau sultanate as 'separate and distinct from Indonesia' (Wee 2002: 500-1). The sultanate, which had been effectively abolished by the Dutch in 1911, had close links with the Melaka-Johor dynasty, and it was on the basis of this Malay identity that the province sought to establish its distance and distinction from Java-centred Indonesia. Armed resistance to the emergent Indonesian republic lasted throughout the revolution until 1950, when Muhammad Yunus fled to Johor.

By the end of 1950, the Dutch had conceded the Republic and most of the regional rebellions had been quashed, although Darul Islam continued to hold out in parts of West Java and Sulawesi. It appeared to many that the secular nationalist vision of Indonesia had won. In the discourse of Indonesian nationalism, the figure of Sukarno stands tall in these early years of Indonesian independence, even at times when his political powers were limited. He saw himself as a man who, by force of his charisma alone if necessary, could forge a new, Indonesian identity. Neither was this entirely self-aggrandisement; even the army found Sukarno 'essential' as a 'symbol of unity for a divided nation' (Federspiel 1973: 407; Vickers 1989).

The triumph of Sukarno's nationalism was neither complete nor long-lived, however. The 1955 elections – the only fully free elections in Indonesia until after the fall of Suharto – reasserted the importance of regionalism. At the national level, the results were ambiguous, with an almost exact split between the main Muslim parties, *Masyumi* and NU, taking a combined 39 per cent of the vote and 102 seats, and the secular communists (PKI) and nationalists (PNI) taking together 38 per cent of the vote and 96 seats; the remaining 57 seats went to smaller parties. The regional distribution of the votes was clearer. Support for the secular PKI and PNI and the traditionalist Islamic NU came almost exclusively from Java, and from its East and Central provinces in particular; all three obtained more than 85 per cent of their vote in Java (figures from Dahm 1971: 434-7). In contrast, *Masyumi* dominated the outer islands. Thus, 'rather than resolving political issues, the elections merely helped to draw the battle-lines more precisely' (Ricklefs 1981: 238). Subsequent cabinets collapsed in quick succession as Sukarno moved towards an increasingly authoritarian stance. A dialectic emerged of restive provinces provoking greater authoritarianism from the centre, in turn reinforcing fears of Javanese dominance. Finally, in March 1957, open rebellion broke out again in North Sulawesi and, soon afterwards, Sukarno declared martial law and instituted a system of 'Guided Democracy'.

The early years of Guided Democracy were dominated by the renewal of centre–periphery tensions, which culminated in full rebellion by some of the outer islands. In February 1958, dissatisfied military and civil elites in Sumatra declared a Revolutionary Government of the Indonesian Republic (PRRI, or *Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia*), supported by rebel groups in South Sulawesi and with links to Acehnese rebels and, later, to the *Darul Islam* movement in West Java. It also apparently received covert support, in the form of small arms, from the United States, a fact which Sukarno used effectively to undermine popular support for the rebellion. In addition to pushing for greater regional autonomy, the PRRI demanded

the formation of a new Indonesian national cabinet under the auspices either of Hatta, a native Sumatran with links to the *Masyumi* party that had won heavily in the outer islands in the 1955 elections, or the Sultan of Yogyakarta. Military action by Jakarta finally crushed the rebellion in 1961, but it had a lasting impact on Indonesian society and politics, not least of which was providing a degree of legitimacy for the renewed authoritarianism of Guided Democracy (Feith and Lev 1963).

As with the early regional struggles, the rebellion constituted an intermeshing of regional economic grievances with ideological and ethnic identities. Sulawesi and Sumatra were both resource rich exporting zones, aggrieved at perceived neglect or exploitation by Jakarta. The rebellion was thus a manifestation of the 'basic Indonesian problem', inherited from the colonial period, of a 'top-heavy bureaucracy, originating and centered in Java' with economic resources distributed richly across the outer islands (van der Kroef 1958: 80). The domination of national politics by ethnic Javanese and the increasing reliance of Sukarno on the communists were also contributory grievances, but the PRRI itself was not ethnically chauvinist, comprising as it did an alliance between the mainly Christian groups of Sulawesi and the Muslims of Sumatra; indeed, the PRRI cabinet even included two Javanese members (Feith 1962: 586). Differences in strategy and ultimate ambitions between the Muslim and Christian components of the rebellion increasingly fragmented the rebellion, however, leaving it easier prey for the Jakartan military response. Ironically, the failure of the rebellion resulted in the increased Javanisation of the military, as Javanese officers and troops became the 'de facto occupiers and controllers' of the rebel regions (Anderson 1983: 483).

The Guided Democracy of Sukarno's latter years as president has been seen as the recreation – or perhaps re-imagining – of the pre-colonial mandala polity: a hierarchical and tributary Centre-oriented organisation, with the powerful, quasi-Sultanistic figure of Sukarno at its head (Geertz 1964). In doing so, however, it created only a 'participation gap', as ethnically-oriented local elites were excluded from national decision making (Liddle 1970: 222). Sukarno may have been a highly charismatic figure, in the Weberian sense that finds many parallels in traditional Javanese political culture (Anderson 1990: ch. 1 & 2; Weber 1946), but this charisma was not enough to bind together the disparate ethnic elites that were emerging. Sukarno's last-ditch attempt to forge national unity under a new acronym, NASAKOM, that was supposed to unite the three major strands of Indonesian society – nationalism (*nationalisme*), religion (*agama*) and communism (*kommunisme*) – met with little success. The Pandora's Box of horizontal identities, once opened, could not be closed by the re-assertion of centripetal vertical allegiances. In such a situation, it was perhaps inevitable that some actors would see brute force the best way of re-closing the Box.

In 1965, a botched coup – which its leaders claimed was in fact a kind of pre-emptive counter-coup – and subsequent successful counter-coup (or, presumably, counter-counter-coup) led by the previously little noticed General Suharto, heralded a slow regime transition as Suharto adeptly took over first Sukarno's powers and then, in 1968, his position as President of the Republic. Accompanying Suharto's rise to power was the bloodiest period of Indonesia's history, a pogrom of communists and suspected communists, that claimed between 500,000 and a million lives, mainly in Java and Bali (Cribb 1990; Cribb 2001; Fein 1993). While specifically anti-Chinese violence was a constituent of the massacres, most Western academics conclude that – at the national level at least – the violence was not primarily ethnic (Coppel 1983; Cribb 1990; Robinson 1996). The targeting of Chinese victims is thus seen as a combination of associational stereotyping of the Chinese as Communists and, in the context of widespread violence, some degree of 'score settling'. While anti-Chinese

sentiment during the post-coup massacres may have been secondary to, or a subsidiary corollary of, the primarily politico-ideological motivations on the national level, it is also clear that where and when it suited the new regime, these sentiments were encouraged even to predominance over anti-Communist fervour. This was certainly the case in West Kalimantan, where PKI cadres and other rebels held out in a ten-year rebellion against the New Order regime. On the border with Malaysian Sarawak and thus at the regional heart of the policy of *konfrontasi*, West Kalimantan province had long been home to a bewildering array of militarised groups, including both Indonesian and Sarawakian groups opposed to the formation of Malaysia, and even Bruneian anti-Sultanists. In this context, with a provincial government loyal to Sukarno that proved reluctant to move decisively against the Communist party in the post-coup environment, the military instigated, organised and encouraged Dayak massacres of thousands of Chinese, and the forced expulsion of over a hundred thousand more. In doing so, the new regime not only destroyed 'a long history of close relations, including intermarriage' between the two groups, but sowed the seeds for years of ethnic violence to come (Davidson 2003; Davidson and Kammen 2002: 58).

After ensuring its grip on power, Suharto's New Order regime moved to suppress all public discourse on communal differences in the name of national security, under the acronym SARA – *suku* (ethnicity), *agama* (religion), *ras* (race), and *antara-golongan* (inter-group). The SARA regulation was accompanied by a range of policies aimed at undercutting ethnic and regional affiliation and organisation. Under the 'floating masses' concept, party organisation was not allowed at the local level, except during official election campaign periods, and political activity more broadly was tightly controlled by the state (McVey 1996). Cultural projects, such as the notorious *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah* (Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park), 'presented the acceptable limits of Indonesia's cultural difference' (Murray Li 2000: 149; Pemberton 1994). Museum curators became the 'modern day palace-poets' of Indonesia (Taylor 2003: 343).

If ethnicity was to be generally suppressed or reduced to a ceremonial 'celebration' of diversity, however, the New Order regime held up at least one ethnic group as separate – the Chinese. Victims of some of the most blatant ethnic suppression in the early years of the regime, including the banning of Chinese names and Chinese characters, the Chinese were held up by the New Order as a contaminating 'Other' that threatened the authenticity of the nationalist project (Heryanto 1998: 97; Rakindo 1975). Forever subject to assimilationist policies, they were thus *denied* the ability to assimilate fully – for instance, alone amongst Indonesian citizens, they were obliged to have their ethnicity marked on their identity cards – and thus remained the perennial political outsiders. That the New Order rhetoric rallied against the Chinese as the 'scapegoat' of Indonesian politics did not, of course, prevent Suharto and his family having close business relations with many prominent Chinese – relations stretching back to Suharto's days as a dubious 'fund-raiser' for the army (Schwarz 2004).

It was not just ethnic identity, but religion also that was suppressed as a political force under the SARA regulations for many years of the New Order regime. Political Islam – the source of rebellious movements since the days of Diponegoro – was treated with deep suspicion and, after the New Order vehicle *Golkar* won the 1971 general election, the existing Islamic parties were pressured into amalgamation, forming the new *Parti Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP – United Development Party), which was tightly controlled. By the mid-1980s, the regime felt confident enough of its control over political Islam to pass a law requiring all associations to declare the

state ideology of pancasila their *only* ideological foundation, a move that infuriated Islamic organisations, but with which most reluctantly complied (Eldridge 1995).

While the New Order sought to suppress public discourse on ethnicity and religion – essentially any form of horizontal identity that was not the official nationalism of Indonesian-ness – its social development programmes had important material effects on the formation of such identities, particularly the state-sponsored 'transmigration' programme, the largest resettlement project in the world, which relocated substantial numbers of people – at least two million, by government figures, with many more 'unofficial' transmigrants[8] – mainly from over-populated Java to the under-populated outer islands, ostensibly aimed at enhancing 'national unity', as well as improving government capacity and providing local support for military units (Tirtosudarmo 1995). In areas such as Central Sulawesi and Maluku, however, the programme in fact stoked ethnic tensions and fears of 'Javanisation' (Bubandt 1998; Elmhirst 1999). Resentments were heightened by the material aspects of transmigration, which saw resources and access allocated to the settlers, often displacing indigenous communities:

> It is through the creation of an imagined national culture, expressed through natural resource access and use, and the intrusion of both the state and the Javanese transmigrants, that identity, difference and resistance against the homogenizing effects of modernity are forged… The grounds for identity can be read or seen in the struggle for place.

> (Leith 1998: 135)

While Suharto's regime suppressed any overt expression of communal identities, however, the 'greening' of his administration in the later years of the New Order drove a further wedge between ethnic groups differentiated by religion. Originally seen as uninterested in religious matters, or even as a devotee of Javanese mysticism, Suharto's increasingly fractious relationship with the army from the 1980s saw him take an 'Islamic turn' as he sought for a new legitimacy with the burgeoning urban middle classes and a new power bloc to ensconce his rule (Liddle 1996). Key here was the 1990 formation of *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim se-Indonesia* (ICMI - Association of Muslim Intellectuals of Indonesia), chaired by Suharto's protégé, later vice president and then president, B.J. Habibie. ICMI quickly became a hugely influential organization, viewed by many Muslims as a 'ladder to opportunity and influence' (Ricklefs 2001: 393), and by many non-Muslims as a disquieting sign of their increasing marginalization.

In many ways, then, the relationship between the New Order state and processes of identity formation was the obverse of the colonial impact. The Dutch administration of Indonesia had deliberately fostered local ethnic and religious identities in a crude divide and rule strategy, in the process inadvertently also creating a nascent Indonesian nationalism, based on shared experiences of colonization. In contrast, the New Order regime privileged a discourse of Indonesian national identity, while its social and political policies reinforced and antagonised localized identities. For many years, the brute force of the regime repressed any conflagration of these competing identities, but the decay and collapse of the New Order in the late 1990s created the political space and the economic motives for these differences to be exploited with

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[8] Data derived from the *Deparemen Tenaga Kerja dan Transmigrasi* (Department of Manpower and Transmigration) website: <http://www.nakertrans.go.id>, downloaded 9 June 2004.

tragic consequences across the archipelago, from Aceh and Kalimantan in the west to Sulawesi, Maluku and Papua in the east.

4.2. Malaysia: Authoritarian Consociationalism

Faced with a similar scenario of attempting to build a nation out of diverse ethnic groups linked only by their shared colonial past, successive Malaysian governments have taken a different stance to that of the Indonesian state. Post-independence Malaysian history has been dominated by the antagonistic relationship between 'Malaysian' nation-building and exclusivist Malay nationalism – a contradiction evident not just in the long-term historiography of the country, but in the practicalities of every administration (Cheah 2002b). The very formation of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the dominant political party since independence, was an act of overt ethnic chauvinism; its subsequent forging of the Alliance administration with the Malay[si]an Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malay[si]an Indian Congress (MIC), an act of 'nation-building'. The relative success of the Malaysian state in avoiding significant ethnic conflict can be understood at least in part in terms of the state's success in managing these conflictual historical narratives.

In contrast to Indonesia's war of independence, the territories that were to form Malaysia gained their staggered independence from the British in a process of negotiated transition, albeit against the backdrop of a bloody communist insurgency. Peninsular Malaya gained full independence in 1957, before joining with Singapore, itself self-governing since 1959, Sabah (formerly British North Borneo) and Sarawak in 1963 to form the Federation of Malaysia.[9] A range of factors in the decolonisation process contributed to the further ethnicisation of society. The process of decolonisation was thus not just a negotiation between a nascent Malaysia and its erstwhile colonial masters, but also an internal negotiation between the major ethnic groups of the new state (Lee and Heng 2000).

As in Indonesia, the process of negotiating the substance of Independence itself contributed to divisions between ethnic groups, particularly over such issues as the status of Islam as the official religion, English and/or Malay as the official language, citizenship rights of the non-Malay population and role of 'special rights' for the Malays. Particularly important here was the original British plan for Malayan independence, the Malayan Union, which would have stripped the Malay monarchs of all but ceremonial powers and granted broad citizenship rights to non-Malays. Malay protests against this plan were led by the newly formed UMNO, and had long-lasting ramifications on the construction of ethnic politics in the country (Stockwell 1977; Stockwell 1979). 'Malay nationalism' became the backbone of Malayan politics, aimed at improving the economic lot of the Malays in relation to the Indian and especially the Chinese, and also to establish Malay identity as the basis of Malaysian politics. The anti-Malayan Union agitation and the issue of Malay 'special rights' became an important recourse for UMNO to assert its political role in protecting Malay special rights (Muhammad Ikmal 1995).

The upshot of these agitations and negotiations was an 'Independence Bargain' struck between the new nation's ethnic elites, often reported by the slogan 'Politics for the Malays, economy for the Chinese'. Essentially, the Chinese were to be granted limited citizenship rights and would be allowed to keep their position in the domestic economy in return for the acceptance that the political sphere would be

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[9] Brunei had been part of the original negotiations before pulling out to remain a British protectorate, opting for full independence in 1984.

primarily the domain of the Malays – *ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy). Islam became the official religion, but Malaya was not to be an Islamic state. The Sultans were given essentially ceremonial powers, except for a role as the 'Defenders of Islam'. Both Malay and English would be the official language for ten years, after which it would be Malay only. Islamic law and *syariah* courts were to be established, but they would apply only to Muslims. This constitutional arrangement found its political form in the Alliance – a multiethnic coalition that, for some scholars, was the paradigmatic consociationalist government (Horowitz 1985; Lijphart 1977).

Of course, the consociational model was not to everyone's taste. Some Malays felt that the arrangement compromised too much the idea of Malaya as the *Tanah Melayu* – the Land of the Malays. Many of these Malays coalesced in the *Parti Islam se-Malaysia* (PAS – Pan-Malayan Islamic Party), which in fact found its origins in UMNO's religious wings. Others, mostly non-Malays but also some Malays including UMNO founder Onn Jaafar, believed that the arrangements did no go far enough in promoting a united national identity. Onn himself had left UMNO after failing to persuade its leadership to accept non-Malay members, and had formed the multiethnic Independence of Malaya Party (IMP). The strength of these factions was soon tested electorally, however, first in municipal elections prior to independence, and then in Malaya's first general election in 1959, and the Alliance formula won soundly every time.

If Malaya appeared to have found a political formula for the reconciliation of ethnic and national identities, however, this was soon tested by the creation of Malaysia and, in particular, the inclusion of Singapore, with a population more than ninety per cent Chinese. In the early 1960s, the British government asked Malaya to incorporate Singapore into its federation. The British government was becoming increasingly worried by the rise of communism in Singapore, and incorporation into Malaya was seen as a way to neutralise this. The inclusion of Singapore would, however, have tipped the ethnic balance too far away from Malay dominance for UMNO's comfort. Malaya's Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman thus demanded the inclusion of the north Borneo states to offset the impact of Singapore's entry, to which the British acquiesced. Clearly, Singapore's hasty departure from the federation thus tilted the scales once again in favour of the *bumiputera*, although this effect was somewhat mitigated by unexpected divisions within the *bumiputera*. Tunku Abdul Rahman's assumption that the East Malaysian *bumiputera* would act in tandem with the peninsular Malays was confounded when some communities, most notably the Christian Kadazans in Sabah and Dayak in Sarawak, began articulating their own agenda and demands (Jawam 1991; Loh 1992).

Ethnic violence in Singapore predated its independence. In 1950, three days of rioting broke out in Singapore when the high court annulled the Muslim marriage of a Dutch girl brought up by a Malay family, and returned her to Holland. Demonstrations by Singaporean Malays against what they saw as an insult to their religion, apparently orchestrated by militant left-wing groups agitating for a 'Greater Indonesia', descended into violence against both Europeans and Chinese (Firdaus 1985; Stockwell 1986). Rioting broke out again in 1956 over the alleged infiltration of Chinese middle schools in Singapore by the Malayan Communist Party. The riots raised the prospect of communal conflict as the sole fatality caused by the rioters themselves was a Malay driver beaten by the Chinese rioters, but appeals for calm by Malay political leaders averted wider clashes. The 1956 riots left their mark on the Singapore government, however, which became convinced that a tight internal security apparatus 'was essential if they were to persuade the British to allow them to full independence' in the context of the Malaysian Federation (Clutterbuck 1973: 141).

After Singapore's inclusion in the Malaysian federation, differences quickly emerged between the federal government in Kuala Lumpur and the state government in Singapore, dominated by the People's Action Party and its leader Lee Kuan Yew. Some of these differences were administrative squabbles over the allocation of tax revenues, but of far greater significance was the dispute over the nature of Malaysia and its national identity and the PAP's championing of a 'Malaysian Malaysia', questioning the 'special rights' of the Malays in the country. The dispute was intensified by the PAP's decision to raise its sights beyond Singapore itself and contest some peninsular seats in the 1964 election. Shortly afterwards, ethnic rioting again broke out again in Singapore following anti-PAP agitation, apparently by UMNO-sponsored groups. Thirty-three people were killed in those disturbances, which played a decisive role in fomenting the break between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur (Leifer 1964; Milne 1966). In an inflammatory passage in his memoirs, Lee Kuan Yew later alleged that if Singapore had not been expelled from Malaysia, on going legal proceeding following the riots 'would mean a devastating exposure of key UMNO leaders' methods of incitement to racism and bloody riots' (Lee 2000: 622).

Singapore's rapid departure from Malaysia was arguably not an aberration in an otherwise successful consociation formula, but a symptom of the resurgence of ethnically-oriented horizontal identities through the 1960s. As Means (1970) notes, horizontal conflicts outside of Singapore in the early years of Malaysia were largely ameliorated by territorial threats to the new nation from the Philippines, which under President Macapagal had staked a claim to Sabah based on its pre-colonial status as part of the Sultanate of Sulu, and, more aggressively, from Indonesia, where Sukarno instigated a low-level military 'confrontation' (*konfrontasi*) against the formation of Malaysia, which he viewed as a Western plot to control the region (Jones 2001). But nonetheless, UMNO was undergoing a noticeable transformation at the time, with the rise of more chauvinistic *ultras*, including future Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, through the party ranks. Indeed, it had been the *ultras* under the leadership of UMNO secretary-general Syed Ja'afar Albar that had been most vociferous in the Singapore dispute.

In the late 1960s, the immediate threats to Malaysia's territorial integrity disappeared after Marcos and Suharto both turned their attention to their respective internal problems, and the growing influence of the Malay *ultras* became clear. The antagonistic relationship between Malaysian nationalism and Malay chauvinism reached an apogee in the aftermath of the 1969 general elections, in which the Alliance performed relatively badly, losing its two-thirds majority in the federal parliament and control over a number of state legislatures. Celebratory parades by the Chinese-based opposition parties, the main beneficiaries of the Alliance's slump, and retaliatory Malay demonstrations quickly descended into rioting and looting, in which at least a hundred people were killed and more than six thousand (mainly Chinese) properties destroyed (Comber 1983). The government responded by imposing a state of emergency and suspending parliament, to be replaced by a National Operations Council (NOC). Parliament was restored eighteen months later after the Alliance, later renamed as the *Barisan Nasional* (BN – National Front), induced most opposition parties to join the coalition, restoring its parliamentary dominance. The consociationalist Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman was also replaced by his deputy, the more aggressively pro-Malay Abdul Razak, who had in any case been in effective control as Director of the NOC.

The government argued that the root cause of the May riots had been the economic disparities between the Malays and the non-Malays, a legacy of the colonial administration and its policy of 'ethnic division of labour'. In an attempt to reverse this, the Razak administration implemented the New Economic Policy (NEP). The

NEP had two ostensible goals – the complete eradication of poverty, and the eradication of the association between ethnic group and economic role. In reality, however, it heralded a new era of state interventionism and Malay chauvinism; in the words of Alasdair Bowie (Bowie 1994: 171), it represented 'a form of Third World economic nationalism [in which] the principal antagonist was not foreign but rather domestic [i.e. the Chinese]'. In addition, the government also promulgated a National Cultural Policy in which 'Malay culture and language were taken as being appropriate for all citizens' (Means 1991: 133). Amendments were passed to the constitution denoting certain 'sensitive issues' – the position of the Malay language and Rulers, and the special rights of the Malays – which were barred from public debate.

If, as most scholars agree (see Case 1996 for a notable exception), 1969 marked the end of true consociational democracy in Malaysia, why has the country remained mostly peaceful in the three decades since? Firstly, the Malaysia state moved not just away from consociationalism, but also from democracy more broadly, appropriate ever more coercive powers in a process of 'incremental authoritarianism' (Crouch 1996), although never reaching the degree seen in New Order Indonesia. Secondly, while the NEP was in one sense a chauvinistically Malay policy, in another sense it could be seen as a nationalist policy, in that it sought to eradicate genuine horizontal inequalities between the main identity groups, a major impediment to maintaining ethnic peace (Stewart 2002). As the prominent critical academic Jomo Kwame Sundaram noted at the end of the NEP period, whilst they may have suffered economically, most people across all ethnic groups accepted that the NEP was politically necessary (Jomo 1990).

Whilst these factors were of undoubted importance, in the remit of this paper I want to focus more on the reconstellation of horizontal and vertical identities in Malaysia after 1969. Important here was the new attention paid to nation-building. As a counterpoint to its chauvinistic policies, the post-1969 administrations in Malaysia also began to take more seriously the inculcation of a national identity, something that had been noticeably lacking under the Tunku. A Department of National Unity was formed, and a 'National Ideology' (the *Rukunegara*) promulgated, whose five points – belief in God, loyalty to King and country, upholding the constitution, rule of law, and good behaviour and morality – bore more than a passing resemblance to Indonesia's *pancasila* (Milne 1970). Despite his previous position as a leading *ultra*, this challenge was taken up even more under by Mahathir, Prime Minister from 1981 to 2003, whose 'Vision 2020' spoke in much more inclusive terms of a 'bangsa Malaysia'. As Heng Pek Koon (1998: 73) notes:

> Chinese political observers were particularly struck by the unprecedented usage of the term *Bangsa Malaysia*. Malay leaders previously had employed the word *bangsa* within a chauvinistic Malay nationalist context… By widening the word's connotation to embrace non-Malay membership, Mahathir appeared to be breaking from the convention of Malay nationalist exclusivity.

The political system that has emerged in Malaysia over the past three decades is one that is immensely hierarchical – even the internal structure of UMNO and the other BN parties has a complex hierarchy that almost defies belief – but also segmented along clearly demarcated horizontal lines. In the Malay arena, the regime has actively promoted the cultural 'tradition' of deference to leadership and unquestioning loyalty derived from the Melakan heritage; when Mahathir's position at the helm of UMNO was challenged in 1987, one of his responses was a cultural programme of 'loyalty songs' (*lagu setia*) reasserting these values (Kessler 1992). In the economic sphere, the huge increase in government expenditure that derived from the

developmentalism of the NEP led to the creation of a network of patrimonialism that penetrates right down to the village level through local party branches and institutions such a the JKK (*Jawatankuasa Kemajuan Kampung*, or Village Development Committees).

In the West Malaysian peninsular, this stratification and regulation of both horizontal and vertical identities was broadly successful. While other identity groups exist which did not and do not fit into the 'grand scheme' – the *orang asli* of the central highlands, the ethnic Thais of the northern Malay states, and the Portuguese community of Melaka – they are all numerically insignificant. Where it has been tested over time is in the East Malaysian states, and Sabah in particular. Stated in broad terms, the East Malaysian states seem strong candidates for separatist movements: historically separate that experienced 'late integration' into the nation (cf. Bertrand 2004 on East Timor and Indonesia), ethnically and religiously distinct from the dominant group in the country and economically disadvantaged, despite abundant natural resources. Despite this, however, separatism has been an issue of relative unimportance in East Malaysia. In Sabah, the spectre of separatism has been raised twice since the formation of Malaysia, but on both occasions primarily in the form of accusations raised by the federal government against its political opponents in the state (Brown 2004). Never in Sabah or Sarawak has a popular movement for secession emerged, but both states have seen the emergence of new identities that have mobilised for greater autonomy. In Sabah, this took the form of the 'Kadazan revival' that emerged in the late 1970s and which dominated local politics in the state for two decades through the formation of the *Parti Bersatu Sabah* (PBS, or United Sabah Party); in Sarawak 'pan-Dayakism' has been a feature of the political scene since the 1970s, although it has never reached the maturity of the Kadazan movement in Sabah (Jawam 1991; Loh 1992).

5. Conclusions

In Indonesia, Dutch colonialism left a legacy of multiplistic and often antagonistic horizontal identifications along religious, ethnic, regional and national lines. As the prospect of an independent Indonesian nation came closer, these distinctions were aggravated in the outer islands by the concern that an independent Indonesia would be politically dominated by Java, concerns that proved founded. Thus emerged a system of vertical identities in relationship to the political centre that coincided with broad horizontal identities that pitted local against Javanese identities. The 'Majapahit Visions' (Taylor 2003) of Sukarno and Suharto only conflagrated this dangerous situation. The physical geography and imagined grandeur of Majapahit may have provided a legitimising narrative for the formation of an Indonesian nation – a legitimacy that was otherwise sorely wanting – but it also brought with it the political baggage of Majapahit as a Javanese tributary-based empire, not a nation. Since de Tocqueville, it has often been argued that a strong state may be able to repress societal forces in the medium term, but when societal forces do break out in such contexts, they will do so with greater – often revolutionary – intensity. Such appears to have been the case with respect to horizontal ethnic, regional and religious identities in Indonesia. As the New Order dam crumbled at the end of the last century, repressed grievances, based on (perceptions of) economic and political inequalities, broke through in a flood that engulfed virtually the entire archipelago (Aragon 2001; Bertrand 2004; Sidel 2001; van Klinken 2001).

Political structures can be designed to reflect the social identities underlying them, but they can also be used as the grounds for promoting new identities. In Indonesia, the Jakartan political elites rejected the model of federalism proposed by the Dutch, preferring instead a unitary state that, it was hoped, would help promote a unitary,

Indonesian identity. In contrast, the Malayan elites rejected the unitary model proposed by the British in favour of a federal consociational system that embodied a process of ethnic negotiation, albeit one that has been increasingly undermined. Whereas Sukarno and Suharto sought to eradicate ethnic and religious horizontal identities and maintain their political dominance through the coercive repression of such identities and the promotion of a national identity that incorporated both horizontal and vertical aspects, the post-1969 Malaysian regime took an alternate stance of reasserting vertical identities *within* clearly demarcated horizontal groups. The assertion of Malay political dominance in this period was ameliorated by the promotion of a national identity, which has increasingly moved away from the Malay chauvinism of the National Cultural Policy to a more inclusive nationalism.

Looking to the future, processes of globalisation and the 'high-tech' modernisation associated particularly with the governments of Mahathir are increasingly being seen as the main drivers of identity reformulation in Malaysia, particularly amongst the Malays (Bunnell 2002a; Bunnell 2002b; Korff 2001). In the early years of Mahathir's tenure, long before the grandiose grandeur of the Multimedia Super Corridor and the towering redefinitions of Kuala Lumpur's skyline, the promotion of Islam had already been identified as key to Mahathir's desire to 'disciple' the Malays, whom he viewed in almost Orientalist terms as genetically backward (Mahathir 1970; Mauzy and Milne 1983). Lacking the royal lineage of all his predecessors in the premiership, Mahathir had little time for the mystique of Malayness, which he viewed as an impediment to modernity (Khoo 1995). Though no great Islamic scholar himself – in stark contrast to his nemesis-turned-protégé-turned-nemesis Anwar Ibrahim – Mahathir sought to place a modernist Islam as central to an expanded Malay identity. Just as the adoption of Islam in the region more than five centuries ago was driven largely by commercial incentives, so usage in the hegemonic reformulation of modern identities is driven by commercial motives.

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