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Local Heroes and National Consciousness

The Politics of Historiography in Riau

Proponents and planners who continually use buzzwords such as 'globalization' and transition' frequently overlook the role of history, and particularly modern historical writings, in the creation and perpetuation of the nation states and international relations they discuss. Although the past is often depicted as unchanging, objective and factual, history is written about past events to reinforce current issues that the author wishes to support. The role of history in contemporary Indonesian society can be seen in a quote from a member of the Society of Indonesian Historians, Abdurrachman Surjomiharjo (1989:162), when he asked whether 'historians from the new generation are able to justify research and writing about the past by presenting its relevance for contemporary times.' This attempt to make the past relevant can be seen with particular clarity throughout Indonesia, where a distinctive form of historical writing has arisen: biographies of regional heroes nominated for consideration as national heroes (*pahlawan nasional*). Even though these works are rarely cited by serious scholars of Indonesian history,¹ the National Heroes Program is often the main popularizer of history for the Indonesian nation. Furthermore, the program and the biographies produced through it serve the function of creating a growing pantheon of saintly heroes who can be used to instill the values of the modern nation state of Indonesia in its citizens.

Although other Southeast Asian nations have national heroes whose exploits are glorified through national holidays, biographies and holy sites, Indonesia is unique in the extent of its program.² A National Heroes Board (BPPP, Badan Pembina Pahlawan Pusat), as part of the Department of Social Affairs and in coordination with the Department of Education and Culture, promotes stories of these heroes with an annual National Heroes'

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¹ Although the University of Hawaii's Hamilton Library has over one hundred of these works, and has had them for up to three decades, I was apparently the first person to check any of them out of the library.

² There are concerted efforts in other Southeast Asian nations to secure the place of heroes in their national histories, but they are not on the highly coordinated scale of that in Indonesia. An example of such efforts outside of Indonesia can be found in the National Heroes Commission in the Philippines. A major difference, however, would be that the Philippines mainly focuses on heroes of the Philippine revolution and the documents they produced, while Indonesia actively promotes heroes from any period in its past. For the Philippine example see Mabini 1965; Qurino 1964; and Ricarte 1963.

Day (November 10), as well as short biographies and charts that are available in every bookstore and marketplace in the archipelago and can be found in many classrooms. Within this program to promote national heroes, each province nominates various figures from its past to join the national pantheon, which is filled with figures such as Diponegoro and Sudirman. The existence of such a national program can be seen as part of the government's efforts to create a national culture (Derks 1995).³ By elevating local figures of importance to a national spotlight, 'peaks' of all the various cultures of the archipelago are featured. Although this system creates at best a superficial understanding of the hero's significance at the local level, this is contrasted with the regional pride that is achieved when a local figure achieves national recognition.

This granting of national recognition to prestigious local heroes has not gone unnoticed in Riau. In November 1995, President Soeharto elevated Tuanku Tambusai, a figure of importance in the Rokan river basin, to *pahlawan nasional* status. Although Tuanku Tambusai is the first person associated with Riau to achieve such standing, he was not the first local hero nominated from the provincial level. Over the past two decades there has been a concerted effort to achieve such status for other, arguably more prominent figures from the region. The most distinctive attempts to promote a local hero have been on behalf of the last Sultan of the Siak kingdom, Syarif Kasim II, and the eighteenth-century political and military leader of the Riau archipelago, Raja Haji Fisabilillah. By examining the biographies written about these two figures, who have not achieved national hero status, a better understanding of attempts to mold a local past to support the modern needs and goals of the Indonesian government can be understood. In addition, these two biographies have been written and supported by both national and local scholarly figures in an attempt to gain national recognition for Riau, and in the process contributed to the popularization of nationalist historiography. In order to place these efforts in context, however, it is important first to examine the entire program of national heroes, and how it developed. This will be followed by a description and analysis of the biographies written about the two local heroes from Riau who have not yet achieved national recognition. These efforts then will be contrasted with that of the successful effort to promote Tuanku Tambusai as a *pahlawan nasional*.

The National Hero Process

The creation of a formal process to determine official Indonesian national heroes developed over several decades before and after Indonesian Independence. The search for national heroes originated during the 1930s as a backlash against a colonial system of education that taught Indonesian

³ Also see the contribution by Will Derks to this volume.

history as an extension of Dutch expansion into the archipelago. This history curriculum focused on the glory of the pre-European Hindu past, as symbolized by Majapahit, and then followed the defeat and humiliation of various kingdoms throughout the archipelago, while 'individual Indonesians fitted into the textbook stereotype as obstacles or antagonists to the steady rise of Dutch power' (Reid 1979a:293). As the graduates of the Dutch school system began to populate the Indonesian nationalist movements of the 1920s and 1930s, however, these textbook antagonists to Dutch colonial rule came to be seen as nationalist heroes representing an ideal of sacrifice to a future Indonesian nation. By the 1930s a national trinity of heroes came into being, which consisted of the three most prominent leaders of nineteenth century anti-Dutch conflicts. This trinity comprised Diponegoro, Teuku Umar and Tuanku Imam Bonjol; Soekarno referred to them as *pahlawan tiga-sekawan*, the three heroic friends (Reid 1979a:294).

New national histories also began to come into shape during this same period in Indonesian history. Among the most prominent authors of these histories was Muhammad Yamin, an official national hero today, whose main goal was to present the history of Indonesia as one of continuous unity over the past six thousand years (Noer 1979:252). Part of this process involved focusing on historical figures whose contribution to Indonesian development was based on what the person had done to further the unification of the archipelago. In such a system figures like Gajah Mada were held up as the ultimate examples of national heroes. The development of national histories and the need to unite Indonesians around figures that represented sacrifice and unity to the newly founded nation, therefore, led to an intensive program of developing new textbooks, myths and heroes. One aspect of this development is the National Heroes Program.

The pantheon of heroes continued to expand under the support of Soekarno during the 1950s, as the country experienced political and economic problems, as well as a series of rebellions in areas such as Sumatra and Sulawesi. During this period the selection of heroes moved beyond the antagonists in Dutch colonial history books and began to focus on local heroes. This promotion of local heroes developed into a centralized system, and qualifications appeared to be based on broad geographical representation as the central government tried to verify its control over many of the outlying provinces while bringing them back into the fold of the Indonesian nation (Reid 1979a:294).⁴ By the early 1960s, as the economy grew increasingly chaotic, Soekarno continued his efforts to unite the nation through patriotism, and as part of the nationalistic fervor the nascent system of promoting national heroes exploded and became official government policy.

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⁴ In the 1970s Jacques Leclerc examined aspects of the regional distribution of these heroic figures as portrayed in stamps issued in the early 1960s (Leclerc 1993).

In 1964 Soekarno issued an order (Nomor: 33 Tahun 1964 Tanggal 14 April 1964) that described the qualifications for becoming an official Indonesian national hero, and developed a number of guidelines to ensure a conformity for the proposals. It is during this period that *pahlawan nasional* moved beyond nation-wide recognition of past deeds to become an entrenched part of the bureaucracy as rules and guidelines were developed. These policies have continued under Soeharto's New Order government. Although a national hero is proclaimed by special decree from the President, the process is quite complicated and involves a range of requirements from identifying the descendants of the hero to obtaining a drawing of the hero for inclusion in the symbolically official chart and 'album' that also includes a one-page biography.⁵ In addition to the short biographies, the albums contain information concerning the exact law that elevated them to national hero status. Using this information it appears that both the Soekarno and Soeharto governments have elevated similar numbers of local heroes to national status.⁶ Since the 1960s, the distribution of books, charts and pamphlets has grown to the point that it is difficult to ignore them in any Indonesian marketplace, bookstore or primary school classroom.

The best explanation of the requirements for achieving *pahlawan nasional* status can be found in a pamphlet that the Ministry of Education and Culture distributed in South Sulawesi in order to answer the questions of various communities concerning what steps would need to be fulfilled before their local heroes could become national heroes (Sagimun MD 1993). The author of the pamphlet, Sagimun MD, is a prominent official in the *pahlawan nasional* program.⁷ He focuses the pamphlet on what are considered to be the important articles in the original 1964 law. According to the criteria set at that time, a national hero is not only someone who died defending the Indonesian nation, but also someone who during their entire life was not disgraced by any action or flawed values (Sagimun MD 1993: 2). The first step in the process of obtaining status as a national hero involves the public or 'knowledgeable citizens' (*beberapa orang yang mengetahui betul jasa-jasa*) nominating local heroes as possible candidates. These interested citizens then compile a biography of the candidate that is presented to the regent (*bupati*) or mayor (*walikota*) of the area where the local hero's exploits are celebrated. The biographies of Sultan

⁵ For example see Team Penyusun Bahtera Jaya 1988.

⁶ As of 1988 the Soekarno government had established forty-eight national heroes in comparison with forty-two by the New Order government. Ten of the forty-eight designated by Soekarno, however, were killed during events revolving around 30 September 1965. See Team Penyusun Bahtera Jaya 1988:97-9. As of Spring 1996, there were 102 officially designated Indonesian national heroes.

⁷ In many different publications Sagimun MD is identified as the head of the National Heroes Biography Project. For example, see the preface to Soenjata Kartadarmadja 1977.

Syarif Kasim II, Raja Haji Fisabilillah and Tuanku Tambusai were written as part of this process. After receiving the biographical sketches, the regent or mayor will then ask for support from either the local legislative council (DPRD Tingkat II) or will submit a proposal directly to a special committee, the BPPD (Development of Local Heroes Board; Badan Pembina Pahlawan Daerah), which exists in each Indonesian province. The members of the BPPD include the governor, military commanders of the area, as well as local representatives of the Departments of Justice, Labor, Social Affairs, and Education and Culture. The members of this board are required to investigate the claims of the biographical sketch, and ultimately send recommendations to the National Heroes Board (BPPP), the Minister of Social Affairs and the President. The President makes the final decision on whether a person may enter the pantheon of national heroes.

The actual bureaucratic process for obtaining national hero status is clarified further through rules that help determine the specific criteria for candidates based on the era in Indonesian nationalist history during which the person lived. The candidates from Riau that are described in this paper fall into the category of 'pre-1900' and '1900-1945.'⁸ The criteria for pre-1900 candidates mainly emphasize military exploits, with the requirement that their resistance was for the greater good of Indonesia, and not for the private interests of a small group or family.⁹ The armed resistance must have been on such a scale that it caused concern in Batavia, occurred over a long period of time, and resulted in losses for Dutch forces to an extent that the Dutch required the transfer of extra troops or arms to the region. This stress on warfare obviously means that most *pahlawan* will be men, although some women have been included, such as Cut Nya Din.

The criteria for candidates whose exploits occurred between 1900 and 1945 are much more complicated. This is because in the first half of the twentieth century (which began May 1908 in nationalist terms with the founding of Budi Utomo) there was very little armed struggle. Therefore, most people that are considered to be heroes were founders of organizations that promoted self-sufficiency or modernization. The key factor, however, is that they never faltered in their single-minded goal of a united and free Indonesia. Most of the heroes during this period are considered to be 'Men of Thought or Inspiration.' For all eras, it is emphasized that none could become a national hero if they quit the struggle because they could not see it through. By quitting, they gave moral support to the colonizers. Such characters are considered to be 'clever actors.' Finally, Sagimun MD emphasizes that the elevation of local heroes who opposed foreign

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⁸ Although Sultan Syarif Kasim II made important contributions during the Indonesian Revolution, much of his biography focuses on his role in social and religious education in Siak prior to 1945.

⁹ For an example of the relevance of this aspect in South Sulawesi over the heroic status of Sultan Hasanuddin and Arung Palakka, see Andaya 1981:2-3.

imperialism is important in order to instill a spirit of patriotism among the citizens of Indonesia. Nevertheless, he advises against an inflation in the number of national heroes, to avoid a 'sameness' (*penyama-tingkatan*) in these heroes, and thus supports the development of a variety of designations such as local heroes and national heroes (Sagimun MD 1993:13).

A key part of the nomination for *pahlawan nasional* status is the writing of a biography describing the exploits of the local hero. This aspect of the process was the subject of a national seminar held in 1975. At this meeting prominent members of the National Heroes Project presented several papers. In an essay by Bambang Sumbidio entitled 'Beberapa Catatan Tentang Penulisan Biografi Pahlawan' ('Some Notes About Writing Biographies of Heroes'), the author states that biographies have always formed an important part of Indonesian historiographical writing (Proyek Biografi Pahlawan Nasional 1975).¹⁰ The author adds that biographies are appreciated by Western forms of historiography, where they are very popular and can inform the youth about the past of their nation. A good biography must be 'complete, accurate and objective' without boring the reader with too much detail, while explaining the main character's relationship with events of the time. Although this effort to not include 'too much detail' does strip the hero of his local significance, it can provide another national hero whose actions are relevant to contemporary times.

The results of this program has been the creation of wide variety of educational tools such as charts, books and calendars that permeate the school system in Indonesia. By focusing on the sacrifice of these designated national heroes from almost every corner of the archipelago, the Indonesian government is able to use the historical past to emphasize the relevance a variety of modern Indonesian ideals, as found in the state ideology of Pancasila. Prior to 1995 there were no *pahlawan nasional* from Riau.¹¹ Beginning in the late 1980s, a concerted effort began to elevate local Riau heroes to a national status. In a 1988 speech the governor of Riau, Soeripto, stated that he supported the promotion of at least seven local heroes to national status (Soeripto 1989a).¹² Of these seven particular emphasis is placed on Raja Haji Fisabilillah, Tuanku Tambusai, Panglima Sulung Reteh and Sultan Syarif Kasim II, thus representing most of the major regions of Riau (Soeripto 1989b:83). To further support the elevation of a local Riau hero to an increasingly crowded national pantheon, Soeripto echoes the concerns of members of the National Hero

¹⁰ The page numbers in this publication are not marked clearly.

¹¹ As of Spring 1996 there were 102 national heroes. Of those from Sumatra, most come from Aceh and West Sumatra. See Team Penyusun Bahtera Jaya 1988:97-9.

¹² Among these heroes are Ara Singa of Indragiri, Hang Nadim of Batam, Sultan Muhammad Ali of Siak, Tengku Besar Panglima Sulung Reteh of Indragiri, Tuanku Tambusai of Rokan, and Sultan Syarif Kasim II of Siak.

Project by emphasizing that the decision to name a national hero must be done in a rational manner, without emotion. Soeripto describes the National Heroes Program, much as Sagimun MD has, as one in which the proliferation of national heroes has reached a saturation point. Soeripto mentions that, 'perhaps there are some who feel that Riau is blindly searching for heroes from the area that at the time did not have an admitted National Hero' (Soeripto 1989b:83). To counter such contentions, and echoing the concerns of the 1975 bibliography project, Soeripto emphasizes the 'objective' and 'true' aspect of Riau's heroes throughout the speech.

Despite such promotion of local heroes from the governor of Riau, there seems to have been little action in the area of promotion through a biography; only two official biographies with the specific goal of national hero status have been published, one for Raja Haji Fisabilillah and the other for Sultan Syarif Kasim II, and the latter was published in the 1970s. Despite this lack of support on a provincial or national level, there has been visible support for two regional heroes, Tuanku Tambusai and H. Abdur Rahman Shiddiq, on the subprovincial level (Umar Ahmad Tambusai 1981; Syafei Abdullah 1982). Biographies of these two regional figures have been approved by the local departments of Education and Culture and Religious Affairs, but they are not authorized biographies written specifically for the National Heroes Program. Despite the lack of official recognition, ironically, it is one of these figures, Tuanku Tambusai, who became Riau's first *pahlawan nasional* and his official biography has yet to be published.¹³ The next two sections of this paper will focus on the official biographies that were written to support Raja Haji Fisabilillah and Sultan Syarif Kasim II for national hero status. Although these two biographies were unsuccessful in their goal, they represent not only attempts to make the past in Riau relevant to modern Indonesia, but also local attempts at creating a sense of national recognition for figures of local importance.

Sultan Syarif Kasim II

The last ruler of the kingdom of Siak, Sultan Syarif Kasim II, was nominated for national hero status in a 1977 publication that was published directly from Jakarta (Soenjata Kartadarmadja 1977). The author, Soenjata Kartadarmadja, a historian who has written at least six biographies of national hero candidates, was representing the wishes of the BPPD and the local parliament (DPRD) when he published the biography (Soenjata Kartadarmadja 1977:10).¹⁴ As a representative of the central government, whose

¹³ This information comes from interviews with officials prominent in the promoting Tuanku Tambusai. The biography submitted to the National Heroes Development Board is titled *Riwayat Hidup Tuanku Tambusai* (Biography of Tuanku Tambusai).

¹⁴ For examples of other works by this author, see Soenjata Kartadarmadja 1975; 1978.

goals are to perpetuate national histories that emphasize unification, but not from the region itself, Kartadarmadja is an author who is ideal for framing local heroes in a nationalist perspective. By doing so, however, he has stripped Sultan Syarif Kasim of all of his local significance. The result is a relatively short book, thirty-two pages, that does not focus much on events during the life of Sultan Syarif Kasim II. The first ten pages are not even about the last ruler of Siak, but describe the development of the kingdom of Siak since the early fifteenth century. The biography of the Sultan then takes up the next ten pages of text. The final thirteen pages consists of a bibliography and list of informants, a pronouncement that Sultan Syarif Kasim II is considered to be a *Warga Utama Daerah Riau* (Leading Citizen of Riau), four pages of reproductions of the Sultan's death certificate, and an edited transliteration of a book, *Babul Qawaid*, describing the governmental structure of Siak. There is very little emphasis of the role that the Sultan played in bringing Siak into the Indonesian republic, which would be needed to fulfill the requirements of a *pahlawan nasional*, nor his importance in contemporary Riau.

Since the *Riwayat Hidup* of Sultan Syarif Kasim II does not focus very much on the supposed subject of the biography, perhaps it is best to examine what actually is mentioned in support of the nomination of the Sultan for national hero status. Kartadarmadja begins by explaining that the Syarif Kasim II was born in 1890, the eldest son of the Sultan. While still a youth the future Sultan studied in Jakarta, at one time even under Snouck Hurgronje. Syarif Kasim was installed as Sultan of Siak following the death of his father in 1915. During this period of his life, he changed the structure of government to better suit the reality of Siak in the early twentieth century by revising the *Babul Qawaid*. He also supported the development of religion in Siak by promoting the construction of new schools, in which females were allowed to participate, and endorsing the efforts of religious officials in supervising all official transactions, such as weddings, in the kingdom. In addition, according to local informants, the Sultan refused to accept Dutch interference in the local justice system, and defended the traditional forestry rights of minority groups. Although not well known nationally, these local efforts are still remembered in mainland Riau through the official name of the IAIN (State Institute of Islamic Religion) Pekanbaru, which is named in honor of Sultan Syarif Kasim II. In addition, the Sultan is one of the few local figures who has a street named after him in the provincial capital, an honor rarely seen in a contemporary Indonesia with its proliferation of national hero's names for every street (Soenjata Kartadarmadja 1977:11-2).

While these developments are remembered locally in Siak, the author does not place Sultan Syarif Kasim's legacy of social reform in the context of national reform or the national struggle for independence. In order to develop the argument for national hero status, Kartadarmadja concentrates on the Sultan's opposition to Dutch rule. The author divides the Sultan's

'struggle' (*perjuangan*) into three distinct periods. The first period is during colonization. Prior to 1945 Sultan Syarif Kasim II opposed the Dutch in several ways. Among the examples of opposition to colonial rule are his calling a meeting of his council and appointing Indonesians to teach at local schools, although both of these actions were prohibited by the Dutch. In addition, his anticolonial tendencies were so strong that the Dutch built a military barracks in Siak Sri Indrapura in 1930 (Soenjata Kartadarmadja 1977:14).¹⁵ The second period of struggle for Sultan Syarif Kasim II occurred during the Japanese occupation. His heroism was evident in his opposition to the use of Siak citizens as *romusha* (forced labor). It is stated that his opposition to the *romusha* came through his concern that it would decimate the citizenry of Siak (Soenjata Kartadarmadja 1977:16).

The final period of the Sultan's struggle is during the Indonesian Revolution. The main emphasis in this section of the text is on the Sultan's well-publicized offer to surrender his fortune of Dfl. 13,500,000 to the newly organized Republic of Indonesia in November 1945. After surrendering his fortune, the Sultan oversaw the formation of guerrilla units. He then traveled to Medan and Aceh and gave speeches in support of the independence fighters. While the Sultan was in northern Sumatra, the republican government of Central Sumatra seized the crown jewels of Siak along with a Picard automobile, from which the total of Dfl. 13,500,000 was obtained (Soenjata Kartadarmadja 1977:16-8).¹⁶ Following the revolution, Sultan Syarif Kasim II left Siak and moved to Jakarta. During the early 1960s he moved to Batam and in 1964 returned to Siak. Sultan Syarif Kasim II passed away on 23 April 1968 within the confines of a hospital operated by the economic mainstay of mainland Riau and Indonesia in the 1960s and 1970s, Caltex Oil, Pekanbaru.

Attempts to name Sultan Syarif Kasim II an Indonesian national hero have been unsuccessful. Despite his local status as a social reformer, he is not regarded nationally as a figure who strongly supported the independence of Indonesia as a nation. The primary action in a heroic sense was the surrender of his fortune to the newly born republic. While this mainly consisted of a promissory note, his support is considered to be critical in a symbolic sense. The booklet written by Kartadarmadja, however, represents a relatively weak attempt at promoting a local Riau hero to national hero status. Written by a nationally oriented historian, it has little input from local historians who can better articulate the relevance of the Sultan for modern Indonesia or emphasize any pan-Indonesian ideals that the

¹⁵ For less flattering assessments of Syarif Kasim II's actions during this period see Anthony Reid 1979b:49, 52.

¹⁶ Once again, contrast this description of the sultan's activities with that found in Reid 1979b:221, 246 note 11. In addition, Reid sets the actual amount of the sultan's contribution at Rp. 20,000.

Sultan may have represented. A more sustained effort, with particular support from the Riau provincial government and local academics, occurred during the 1980s with an effort to support a local hero from Riau archipelago, Raja Haji Fisabilillah.

Raja Haji Fisabilillah

One of the best-known figures from the Riau archipelago is the fourth *yang dipertuan muda* (viceroys) of Riau, Raja Haji Fisabilillah. A descendant of Bugis migrants who gained control of the Riau kingdom in the first half of the eighteenth century, Raja Haji became the *yang dipertuan muda*, and thus leader of the Bugis community, in 1777 following the death of Daeng Kamboja. During the early years of his reign, 'the country was at peace and was prosperous, famous for its cheap food and for the amount of profits traders could make there' (Ali Haji 1982:161). Such prosperity led to increased competition with the VOC. These tensions exploded in 1782 when the Dutch refused to share the booty taken from the British vessel *Betsy*, which was seized in Riau harbor (Ali Haji 1982:365).¹⁷ The conflict led to a Dutch attack on Riau in 1783, which was foiled by fortifications erected in Tanjung Pinang and Penyengat Island, located in Riau harbor. After the arrival of Dutch reinforcements, a blockade was placed around the harbor, which was accompanied by occasional clashes between the Dutch and Riau forces for almost one year. According to the *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, a traditional Bugis history of Riau, Raja Haji led the fighters without fear during this period (Ali Haji 1982:169). On 6 January 1784 a Dutch ship, *Melakka's Welvaren*, ran aground while trying to enter the harbor. A Bugis battery opened fire and hit the powder stored on the ship causing it to explode, killing hundreds of crewman including the vice-governor of Melaka, A. F. Lemker (Ali Haji 1982:170, 360). After the Dutch forces fled to Melaka, Raja Haji followed and began a siege of that Dutch stronghold in the Strait. The siege lasted six months, but ended abruptly when Raja Haji was killed in a Dutch counterattack. The local memory of his heroism continues as the grave of Raja Haji Fisabilillah on Penyengat island is considered to be a holy (*keramat*) site today.

In May 1988 a three-day seminar was held in Tanjung Pinang to discuss the heroism of Raja Haji Fisabilillah. Attending the conference were many local dignitaries and academics, as well as representatives of LIPI (Indonesian Academy of Sciences), Pusat Sejarah ABRI (Center for Indonesian Military History), and Malaysian universities. Papers were presented during the seminar, which the provincial government subsequently published as the official biography nominating Raja Haji for *pahlawan nasional* status. The book is over 400 pages in length and is an extensive evaluation of Raja Haji as a hero in his battle against the Dutch. The book contains many

¹⁷ Also see Reinout Vos 1993:129-46.

of the documents required for nomination to national heroism, ranging from a drawing of his face to support from the governor. Most important, however, it represents a blending of the efforts of local historians and officials with national ones in order to create a seemingly excellent nomination for supporting the elevation of a local hero into the national pantheon.

Sejarah Perjuangan Raja Haji Fisabilillah is divided into two sections. The first section of the book is a survey of the historical development of Riau, including economic and social conditions during the eighteenth century and the role of Raja Haji in this development as well as his confrontations with the Dutch. This section was written by well-known historians and literary figures from Riau, such as B.M. Syamsuddin, Hasan Junus and Tenas Effendy. It is supported by the use of maps, citations of a variety of scholarly works, both Western and Indonesian, and helps clarify the significance of Raja Haji within not only a Riau but also a nationwide context. This effort by local scholarly figures in the first section of *Sejarah Perjuangan Raja Haji Fisabilillah* provides a richness in detail and represents a sincere effort to elevate a local hero in Riau history to national prominence. From a historiographical perspective, however, it is interesting because like most national hero biographies, and unlike that written for Sultan Syarif Kasim II, Raja Haji's 'struggle' is placed within the context of the modern Indonesian nation and its values. Two different speeches given by the governor of Riau also represent this effort, and are printed in the book. In a speech given before the local parliament (DPRD Tingkat I) that makes up the preface to the book, Governor Soeripto formally nominates Raja Haji for national hero status by describing his heroism as something, 'that will add historical dimensions to a national context, and can be used in efforts to strengthen national unity' (Soeripto 1989a:xxi). Soeripto then cites all of the relevant laws, focusing on the 1964 law, and describes the May 1988 seminar in order to establish the credentials for Raja Haji's consideration as a national hero. While this locally written and supported section stresses the heroic role of Raja Haji in resistance against outside interference, the authors are local figures supporting a local hero in an increasing competitive national sweepstakes. Since it is important that the local hero be acceptable in a national context, particularly in Jakarta where the ultimate decision is made, the second section of the book represents the clearest attempt to place Raja Haji within a national context.

The second section of the book contains essays presented at the May 1988 seminar. Of the eleven essays in this section, ten are written by non-residents of Riau. The authors of these essays are representatives of LIPI, the Department of Education and Culture in Jakarta and various History Departments in universities located on Java, and exemplify an attempt to bring a national focus on the local hero of Raja Haji, but they are clearly creating their essays based on the first section of the book. By having nationally known figures discuss the heroism of Raja Haji, the Riau government's attempt to circumvent accusations of 'creating' a national

hero can be avoided. By placing them in the book, the editors are able to show that Raja Haji can be seen as not only a local hero but one of national importance.

Among the essays that indonesianize Raja Haji is one written by S. Budhisantoso, the Director of History and Traditional Values in the Department of Education and Culture. In the essay he describes the importance of emphasizing heroes such as Raja Haji Fisabilillah as key to the efforts of New Order government during its Fifth Planning Period (Budhisantoso 1989:150). The heroism of people such as Raja Haji, according to government policy, represents an opportunity to create pride in the future development of the nation. Not only would the heroism of Raja Haji act as a motivator for contemporary Indonesians, but Raja Haji himself exemplified many of the characteristics that the modern Indonesian government promotes. Among these characteristics is an interest in societal (*kemasyarakatan*) relations. As the offspring of a Bugis father and a Malay mother, Raja Haji represented the ideal of cooperation between the different ethnic groups in Indonesia. This concern is exemplified by his trips to other kingdoms in Sumatra, the Malay peninsula and Borneo prior to becoming the *yang dipertuan muda*, during which he tried to strengthen the unity of the peoples of the area.¹⁸ This concern for the variety of ethnic groups in the region also extended to religious affairs, as can be seen in the building of Islamic hostels and mosques as well as the arrival of numerous Islamic teachers and officials. In the area of governmental affairs, Budhisantoso portrays Raja Haji as sensitive to maintaining the unity of the Malay people while maintaining economic stability and prosperity (Budhisantoso 1989:152-4). Eventually when threatened by imperial forces, Raja Haji makes the ultimate sacrifice in defense of his '*tanah-air*.' The cumulative effect of this portrayal of Raja Haji, as a unifier of different ethnic groups under one flag, a developer of religious values and a maintainer of a stable and prosperous economy, mirrors many of the goals of the contemporary Indonesian government.

The 'indonesianization' of the local hero Raja Haji Fisabilillah continues in the other ten essays by national historians. The legitimizing role that these scholars represent is best illustrated in an essay by Hamid Abdullah, the chairman of the History Department at Universitas Diponegoro (Hamid Abdullah 1989). Hamid repeats much of the information that the other ten essays present concerning the role of Raja Haji in the social and economic development of Riau, as well as the history of the struggle against Dutch colonialism. As a conclusion, however, he focuses directly on the issue of whether or not Raja Haji truly fulfills the guidelines for an Indonesian national hero. Although the New Order government has elevated numerous Sumatrans to national hero status, twelve in comparison with the

¹⁸ For an account of Raja Haji's visits to these regions that is not placed in a nationalist context, see Ali Haji 1982:100-1, 133, 367.

Soekarno government's seven, Hamid argues that Raja Haji should be included in the pantheon because he definitely fulfills the requirements for *pahlawan nasional* status due to his sacrifice (*pengorbanan*) and service (*jasa*) against Dutch colonialism. By supporting Raja Haji's nomination, Hamid states that such a move would have a positive impact for all Indonesians that originate from Riau. The lack of a national hero (as of 1988) from this strategically and economically important province, that also has contributed mightily to national development, leaves the people of Riau with a 'strange feeling' (Hamid Abdullah 1989:291). By including Raja Haji in the pantheon of national heroes, Indonesian citizens from Riau can feel properly represented in an important symbolic form of national unity.

In order to complete the requirements for Raja Haji Fisabilillah's elevation to *pahlawan nasional* status, a summary of the essays from the seminar and their conclusions is presented as the last section of the book (Rustam S. Abrus 1989). Following the criteria for national hero status described in the 1964 law and subsequent policy discussions, the authors describe how Raja Haji fought for not only Riau but all of Indonesia until he sacrificed his own life. By attempting to regain control over the Strait of Malacca through a unity of ethnic groups in the region, Raja Haji is portrayed as a hero who was in turn tried to wrest the vital trade links of the region from foreign domination with brilliant strategies and concern for the economic and social well-being of his subjects. The result is a recommendation to present Raja Haji Fisabilillah as the first *pahlawan nasional* from Riau. Prior to this final conclusion is a discussion of the problems that will need to be solved before full nomination can occur. The book is so thorough, however, that the problems are relatively minor. The first problem is establishing the correct heirs of Raja Haji, a problem of minimal proportions considering the availability of local experts such as Raja Hamzah Yunus and the *Tuhfat al-Nafis*. The second problem, creating an accurate representation of Raja Haji that could be placed in the 'album' books and charts available in bookstores is required. It is recommended that the diorama at the Museum of Military (*prajurit*) History at Taman Mini Indonesia in Jakarta be consulted along with the description of the Dutch governor of Melaka who identified the Raja Haji's body after his death as having 'short hair, stubby teeth and various marks on his body' (Rustam S. Abrus 1989:363). The combined effort of local experts and provincial governmental support overcame these small difficulties to produce an exemplary biography that is a model for attempting to secure national hero status for a local hero. The level of effort is represented most clearly by the solving of the problem of a sketch of Raja Haji's face that can be found in the preface of the book containing the recommendations. Despite these efforts Raja Haji Fisabilillah has not yet been elevated to national hero status. Two of the reasons that have been offered for Raja Haji not becoming a national hero include a failure of bureaucrats to mail copies of the book to Jakarta and Raja Haji's cooperation with the Dutch

in Melaka prior to the Betsy episode. Despite these factors, the primary reason seems to be opposition from Malay groups from within Riau that are not associated with the Tanjung Pinang area, who wrote letters to the governor opposing the nomination.¹⁹

Tuanku Tambusai

Although Sultan Syarif Kasim II and Raja Haji Fisabilillah have failed to achieve national hero status, President Soeharto proclaimed the first national hero from Riau on 10 November 1995. This new *pahlawan nasional* was a relatively little-known local hero, Tuanku Tambusai, who catapulted past these two more prominent figures in Riau history through a combination of modern electronic storytelling, passionate extra-local support and bureaucratic promotion. Throughout the entire process, in contrast to the attempts mentioned above, there was little attempt to 'nationalize' the actions of Tuanku Tambusai. He is represented as simply a religious figure from Riau who continually battled the Dutch during the Padri Wars and promoted the Islamic religion.

Tuanku Tambusai was born in the late eighteenth century in the village of Dalu-Dalu in the Rokan river basin, which is located in northern mainland Riau near the borders of the modern-day provinces of West Sumatra and North Sumatra.²⁰ Known as Muhammad Saleh in his youth, he was the child of a religious official in the minor Tambusai kingdom. Tuanku Tambusai studied religious tracts and local martial arts during this period while joining his father during his travels to neighboring kingdoms. Beginning in the early nineteenth century the return of Islamic pilgrims from Mecca, who had been influenced by conservative Wahhabi teachings, began to influence the Minangkabau highlands. This influence also spread to the upper reaches of the Rokan river valley. Sent by his father to the Wahhabi stronghold of Bonjol to study under these religious figures, Tuanku Tambusai ultimately became an Islamic missionary. As a missionary he was sent to the Batak areas of southern Tapanuli and his efforts were so successful that he is remembered today as the leading figure in bringing Islam to this region. Following these efforts, Tuanku Tambusai returned to Dalu-Dalu, established religious schools, and went on the *haj* (pilgrimage).

Around the year 1820 Tuanku Tambusai visited the Wahhabi center of Rao, and along with Tuanku Rao returned to south Tapanuli to continue his efforts to convert the populace to Islam. These efforts to spread Islamic teachings lasted until the Padri Wars spread to the Rokan tributaries in the

¹⁹ This represents the 'friendly' competition between various Malay intellectual groups in Pekanbaru that is based on the region from which they originate in Riau. See the contribution by Will Derks to this volume.

²⁰ Biographical information can be found in a variety of sources. Among the most easily accessible is Umar Ahmad Tambusai 1981. For an English-language description see Schnitger 1989:56-65.

1830s. Along with Tuanku Imam Bonjol and Tuanku Rao, Tuanku Tambusai led efforts to resist not only Dutch attacks but also the establishment of Dutch strongholds in the area. In contrast to these two other leaders, Tuanku Tambusai was neither captured nor killed. He continued to oppose the Dutch through concentrated attacks upon their forts as well as guerrilla warfare, which earned him the nickname *De Padrische Tijger van Rokan* (The Padri Tiger from Rokan). By 1840 Tuanku Tambusai secretly fled to the Malay peninsula and lived in Negri Sembilan until his death in 1883. During this latter part of his life he remained a leading Islamic scholar and teacher.

The process by which Tuanku Tambusai became an Indonesian national hero is quite different from what has been attempted for Raja Haji Fisabilillah and Sultan Syarif Kasim II. First of all, Tuanku Tambusai had not been the focus of any Riau provincial level efforts for promotion to national hero status, except for the last few months prior to November 1995. A concerted effort to promote Tuanku Tambusai did begin as early as 1988, but ironically this push was begun and coordinated outside of Riau province, more specifically in the province of North Sumatra. In 1988 a seminar was held in Medan on the campus of the University of North Sumatra in an attempt to gather information and coordinate the effort to promote Raja Haji, Sultan Syarif Kasim and Tuanku Tambusai to *pahlawan nasional* status (*Seminar Sejarah Kepahlawan Bangsa Indonesia di Riau* 1988). Of the papers presented, the majority were in support of Tuanku Tambusai. This support was mainly from residents of North Sumatra and can be traced to the importance of Tuanku Tambusai in converting vast regions of the province to Islam prior to the Padri Wars. It is from this support for Tuanku Tambusai on the part of the North Sumatran Islamic and scholarly community that the movement to promote this local hero to national status began.

While the 1988 *pahlawan nasional* seminar in North Sumatra began a non-Riau effort to promote Tuanku Tambusai, there was also a concerted effort on the *kecamatan* (regency) level in Riau. Dalu-Dalu lies in the Kampar regency, which received a new *bupati* (regent), named Saleh Djasit, in 1986. As part of his social policies, Saleh Djasit actively promoted Tuanku Tambusai as a national hero. In 1989 he approved the use of governmental funds to sponsor the making of a television movie glorifying the exploits of Tuanku Tambusai. The film premiered on TVRI (Televisi Republik Indonesia) in 1990, and since then has become so popular that it is shown annually on either 17 August (Independence Day) or 10 November (National Heroes Day), although Tuanku Tambusai was not proclaimed a national hero until 1995.

The final push to place Tuanku Tambusai in the national pantheon of heroes began in 1994, and, like earlier efforts, was a combination of extra-provincial and regency level competition and support. Beginning in late 1994, the North Sumatran government proposed that Tuanku Tambusai be

named a *pahlawan nasional* from North Sumatra, not Riau. Aghast at this prospect, scholars from the Kampar regency were sent to Medan to negotiate with their North Sumatran colleagues, while Saleh Djasit wrote letters to West Sumatran officials requesting their support in efforts to claim Tuanku Tambusai as a local hero from Riau.²¹ The governor of West Sumatra sent a letter of support, and eventually the governor of North Sumatra also sent one to the Riau committee that had been formed to promote Tuanku Tambusai. As a part of the negotiations with North Sumatra it was agreed that the Batak *marga* name of Harahap would be inserted into Tuanku Tambusai's genealogical chart. Finally, Saleh Djasit gathered Pekanbaru-based scholars from Kampar to write the official biography that could be submitted to the Riau governor and then the National Heroes Board. The title of Tuanku Tambusai's official biography is *Riwayat Hidup Tuanku Tambusai* (The Biography of Tuanku Tambusai).²² The work is unique within the confines of Riau-based heroic biography in that it does not try to place Tuanku Tambusai within a modern Indonesian context. The exploits of this local hero from Dalu-Dalu are presented as simply those of an Islamic holy man fighting the intrusion of the Dutch into his homeland. The description of his exploits focuses on his intelligence, strength and conviction in both Islamic affairs and opposition to Dutch imperialism, which even earned the respect of his enemies. As a result of the combination of prominence through glorification in a film, the persistence of the Kampar regent and pressure from another province, the *Padrische Tijger van Rokan* became the first *pahlawan nasional* from Riau.

Conclusion

The role that history plays in the creation of the modern Indonesian nation and its citizens is not lost on the central government in Jakarta. Through the seemingly innocuous elevation of local heroes to the status of national heroes, the incorporation of diverse ethnic groups and peoples can be accomplished. While this program is widely promoted throughout Indonesia through books and charts, as well as a national holiday, the province of Riau only recently has had a local hero achieve national recognition. As part of the bureaucratic process of achieving national hero status, biographies were written about at least two other well-known figures from Riau in hope of securing official governmental approval of their actions, which have been portrayed as being on behalf of Indonesia. While these biographies have been unsuccessful, they represent a vital attempt to portray the actions of figures from the past in the context of an Indonesian nation that they could hardly have imagined. More importantly, of the two

²¹ Saleh Djasit's efforts would be cited as one of the crowning achievements of his tenure upon his retirement. See *Riau Pos*, 08-04-1996.

²² I would like to thank Al azhar for providing me with a computer disc copy of this biography.

biographies submitted for national approval, the one written about Sultan Syarif Kasim II was written by a scholar not familiar with Riau, but familiar with the National Heroes Program. The result was a failed attempt to portray a figure of local importance in a favorable national context. The second example was one that was overseen by local experts of Riau history, but with a clearly stated goal of placing the figure, Raja Haji Fisabilillah, in a national context of promoting economic prosperity, ethnic unity and opposition to colonial rule. This effort was supported by prominent members of the Indonesian historical and educational community. Although this second attempt failed, it represents a pattern in which local historians and officials are trying to expropriate figures of considerable local importance and make them amenable to a more national context.

Attempts by officials to elevate local heroes to national status were finally successful in late 1995 when Tuanku Tambusai entered the exclusive club of *pahlawan nasional* as its first Riau-based member. The elevation of this local hero to national status, ironically however, was the result of both pressure from neighboring provinces and efforts of a local bureaucrat that eventually portrayed Tuanku Tambusai as a religious and military leader, while little effort was made to place him in a wider Indonesian context. In addition, the influence of a popular television film promoting Tuanku Tambusai cannot be underestimated. While these previous efforts had failed, the elevation of Tuanku Tambusai as a national hero has resulted in a flurry of activity as other regions of Riau attempt to promote their own local hero. Taking a page from the Tuanku Tambusai book, these efforts mirror that success. For example, supporters of Sultan Syarif Kasim II have sought support from scholars and officials in Aceh and North Sumatra. While such efforts are still continued, they represent not only the competition that exists between various Malay groups within Riau but also their efforts to place themselves within the bureaucracy of historical myth in Indonesia. It is in such attempts to make the past relevant to the present that Riau has in small steps become incorporated further into a modern nation state that consists of a variety of disparate ethnic groups.

²³ *Riau Pos*, 26-03-1996; *Riau Pos*, 01-04-1996.

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