C. Hoshour

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CATHY A. HOSHOUR

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Introduction

Bu Sri and Pak Yatno are from the province of North Sumatra. In 1991 the couple paid an agent Rp. 400,000. (approximately US\$ 194.00)¹ to assist them in illicitly obtaining land in a transmigration site in Sumatra intended by the state for resettlement of Javanese transmigrants. For this sum the agent escorted them to Jakarta where he helped them to obtain false ID cards and other documents required to pose as Javanese and as eligible candidates for the transmigration program. Just two weeks after their departure from Sumatra, Bu Sri and Pak Yatno joined hundreds of settlers on board one of the ships used to transport transmigrants from Java to Sumatra. According to informants, of the sixty families on board who were settled in the transmigration site where I conducted field research only two were Javanese; the remaining fifty-eight were Sumatrans who had gone through the same process as Bu Sri and Pak Yatno in order to transmigrate.

This story illustrates one of several strategies used by Sumatrans hoping to obtain land in one of the government's resettlement sites in Sumatra. Indonesia's transmigration program is one of the largest state-directed resettlement programs in the world. Under its last Five-Year Development Plan (Repelita V, 1989/90 - 1993/94) the government targeted approximately two and a half million people to be-relocated from the archipelago's densely populated inner islands Java, Bali, and Madura to the more sparsely populated outer islands (Departemen Penerangan Republik Indonesia 1994:19-29). In this paper I would like to focus on the implications of this large-scale resettlement for the negotiation of identity, difference, and political locality. In particular, I will examine the role of state allocation of resources in politicizing categories of ethnic identity.

Research findings are based on two years of field research conducted between December, 1991 and April, 1994.² This was a dual-site project

¹ All conversions to US currency are based on an average exchange rate for 1992 and 1993 of Rp. 2,065.

² This research was assisted by a grant from the Joint Committee on Southeast Asia of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Henry Luce Foundation. Additional support for this research was provided by a Fulbright U.S. Student Grant and by a grant from the Sheldon Fund, Harvard University.

involving one year of field research in Tepus, a rural village in the Special District of Yogyakarta, Central Java, which has had consistently high numbers of people transmigrating over the past decade. A second year of field research was conducted in Bagan Sinembah/Tanah Putih,³ a transmigration site and oil palm plantation in Riau Province. Links between the two research sites are strong.⁴ In 1990, thirty-three families from Tepus transmigrated to Tanah Putih. By the time I left the field in March of 1994, nineteen of these families had permanently left the site and returned to their homes in Tepus.

Theoretical Considerations: Identity, Community and the State

This discussion poses several key questions concerning the relationship between population movement, local cultures and 'national identity'. Under what conditions does internal movement within the boundaries of the nation state foster a sense of identity which transcends ethnic identity? Under what conditions does such movement lead to ethnic tensions and/or conflict? How do current efforts to create a 'national identity' impact on the viability of local communities in the receiving areas? Finally, how is the participation of particular ethnic groups in the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) of the nation affected by disparities in their access to resources administered by the state?

The Indonesian government views its transmigration program as a tool for promoting national integration, enhancing national security, alleviating conditions of poverty and landlessness in the archipelago's inner islands, and stimulating regional development through the controlled movement of labor to the outer islands.⁵ The security aspects of transmigration have been clearly spelled out by the National Defense Institute (Lemhanas), which has called for 'a balance ... between economic and defense considerations in the selection and development of new transmigration sites' (Lemhanas 1974:23).⁶

³ The research site encompasses both the Pir Khusus II Bagan Sinembah transmigration settlement and the adjacent Tanah Putih plantation. For purposes of this discussion I use the Tanah Putih designation in order to avoid confusion with the nearby village of Bagan Sinembah, a settlement which is discussed at some length below.

⁴ See table 3.1.9 in Kantor Statistik dan Bappeda Tingkat I Riau 1991:47. Also see table 3.4.4 in Kantor Statistik Prop. D.I. Yogyakarta 1990:63, which indicates that 1,747 families were relocated from the Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta to Riau between 1988 and 1990.

⁵ See Departemen Penerangan Republik Indonesia 1994, particularly Chapter 17. For historical overviews of the transmigration program which examine shifts in program objectives over time see Davis and Garrison (1988); Hardjono 1977; 1983; Mantra and Kasai 1987; and Oey 1982.

⁶ Both Lemhanas (The National Defense Institute) and Hankamnas (the Department of National Defense and Security) have repeatedly emphasized the security risks posed by 'empty' land and the strategic value of the transmigration program in

Research findings indicate that goals of economic development and national integration - as currently pursued - may be in conflict. More specifically, analysis of ethnic relations in the Tanah Putih site indicates that efforts to promote national unity and a 'national identity' via population movement may actually be undermined when resettlement efforts entail the inequitable allocation of valuable resources by the state. This is particularly true when such allocations are made on the basis of ethnic categories, as is the case with Indonesia's transmigration program.

This paper focuses on events and processes that lie between planned change and actual outcomes, based on in-depth local study of one transmigration site. It is a story of state power. Yet, it is also an account of how some of the perceived interests and intentions of the state may be subverted through the collective impact of individual actors pursuing their own interests. The state, Moore observes, does not wield absolute power. Its demands 'are conformed to and eluded, piecemeal' and its ideologies 'both fragmentarily adopted and intermittently resisted' (Moore 1987: 734).⁷

The Research Setting and Competition for Land

Located less than 25 miles from the provincial border which divides Riau and North Sumatra, Tanah Putih is one of several large oil palm plantations developed in this region over the past decade. The site was developed under the *Pir Khusus*⁸ scheme, which is aimed at promoting the joint development of agroindustry and transmigration. In these projects the state provides financial incentives and assistance to state-owned corporations to

populating such areas. These departments have also been successful in their efforts to place retired military personnel in the transmigration sites in order to increase their effectiveness as 'centers of defense'. See Lemhanas 1974:120-3; Hankamnas 1974: 144-6; and 'Results of Discussions of Syndicate III Concerning the Role of Transmigration in National Security and Defense (27 July - 1 August 1970)'.

⁷ Contemporary writings on the Indonesian state in Indonesia have tended to emphasize the absolute power of the state. In light of the enormous investment of state technology, expertise, and financial resources in Indonesia's transmigration program, persistent difficulties in program implementation indicate that such depictions may overestimate the capacity of the state to carry out its intentions. Expansion of the state may actually undermine its effectiveness as a policy-making entity. Indonesia's transmigration program encompasses a mammoth state bureaucracy. Evaluations of the program consistently cite inadequate coordination between the diverse government entities involved in program planning and implementation as a persistent program weakness with far-reaching effects. See Davis and Garrison 1988 and Hardjono 1977 for discussion of the various state entities involved in program planning and implementation, as well as the persistent difficulties linked to problems of program coordination.

⁸ See Davis and Garrison 1988 for an overview of the various types of transmigration sites, including sources of financing, crops, and production models. On the *Pir Khusus* model in particular, see Departemen Transmigrasi R.I. Direktorat Jenderal Pengerahan Pembinaan Direktorat Transmigrasi Swakarsa 1990.

establish their own plantations (*inti*) and develop adjacent areas of the plantation crop (*plasma*) for transmigrant and 'local'⁹ smallholders.

There are two entities involved in administering the Tanah Putih site. PTP IV Gunung Pamela is a large state-owned corporation headquartered in North Sumatra with extensive plantation holdings in Sumatra. The corporation's holdings in Tanah Putih include 2,113 hectares of oil palm and a processing factory. Its labor force includes both permanent and casual day laborers. While the former is composed almost exclusively of in-migrants from the neighboring province of North Sumatra, the latter includes a small number of locals and transmigrants who supplement their incomes with wage labor on PTP IV's plantation holdings.¹⁰ Over 80 percent of the corporation's twenty-six on-site administrators are from North Sumatra.¹¹

During the period of my field research, six out of a total of thirteen *packet*, or sectors of the Tanah Putih site were under the active administration of the Ministry of Transmigration (MOT), with six MOT field personnel assigned to site sectors L and M, in which research was based.¹²

⁹ The Ministry of Transmigration's criteria for selecting locals, or 'APPDT', to be settled in the transmigration sites are vague and imprecise. The operation manual for transmigration officials in Pir sites, for example, refers to *penduduk setempat*, literally inhabitants of a location. The same manual instructs officials to prioritize the following categories of people in the allocation of *packet* (3 hectares of land) to locals: 1. shifting cultivators; 2. those who have cleared an area of forest (*perambah hutan* or forest pioneers); 3. landowners whose holdings are used for site development; and lastly, 4. persons affected by natural disaster (Departemen Transmigrasi R.I. Direktorat Jenderal Pengerahan Pembinaan Direktorat Transmigrasi Swakarsa 1990:15). In contrast, Repelita V states that the following categories of local peoples receive priority in the allocation of *packet*: 1. landless farmers or those with insufficient land holdings; 2. shifting cultivators, and; 3. those cultivating forest lands which should be protected. It should be noted that the vagueness of this definition allows officials significant latitude in selecting locals to be included as smallholders in the transmigration settlements.

¹⁰ Households in the Tanah Putih site received their allocation of oil palm just seven months after the first families were settled in the site. During the period prior to allocation, most households depended primarily on income derived from wage labor for PTP IV. It should be pointed out that participants in many sites do not receive their own allocation of oil palm for a period of one or more years and there have been instances in which transmigrants have subsisted as wage laborers for as long as five years before receiving their allocation. Interviews with former transmigrants indicate that these prolonged periods of wage labor frequently underly the decision to return to Java.

¹¹ See PT Perkebunan IV Gunung Pamela Pir Khusus II Bagan Sinembah dan Kebun Tanah Putih 1992:10, 30-1.

¹² Each sector of a resettlement is evaluated after a period of approximately five years. If deemed to be self-sufficient, its status shifts to that of a village (*desa*) and the site sector is incorporated into the local system of government. At this point in time the sector is no longer under the administration of the MOT and all field personnel are withdrawn. The fact that six sectors of the Tanah Putih site were under the active administration of the MOT at the time of my field research was a crucial factor in selecting Tanah Putih as a research site, as this enabled me to closely observe program

The total settlement includes 6,000 hectares of oil palm which is subdivided and allocated to smallholders on a credit basis.¹³ As currently implemented in Riau, the transmigration program allocates approximately 80 percent of the total *packet* of land in a given resettlement site to transmigrants from Indonesia's inner islands, the majority of whom are Javanese. The remaining 20 percent is designated for 'local' settlers.¹⁴ In the Tanah Putih site each household is to receive a *packet* totaling three hectares, which comprises housing, a houseplot (.25 hectare), land for food crops or diversification (.75 hectare) and oil palm (2.0 hectare).

Demand for *packet* in this region far exceeds the number allocated to locals. The relatively high rate of return to be gained from oil palm has generated interest in these sites among members of local communities and has also greatly intensified the flow of in-migrants from the neighboring province of North Sumatra. In addition to the plantations, rich timber and oil resources have also attracted large corporate investors to this area, many of whom have strong ties to the state. These factors have combined to produce intense competition for land, with small groups of swidden cultivators, local smallholders, large landlords, recent in-migrants, and powerful private and state-owned corporations all struggling for a cut of the pie.

Despite this competition for land, the transmigration program is predicated on the assumption that there are vast expanses of 'vacant' or 'nonproductive' lands in the outer islands. In actuality, site development almost invariably involves appropriation of lands which are claimed and cultivated under local systems of law (*adat*) governing landownership and use.¹⁵ Land conflicts with local landholders and overlapping claims with

implementation at the local level and conduct extensive interviews with field personnel living on the site.

¹³ Most costs of site development in Pir Khusus sites are repaid by the transmigrants through monthly deductions equaling 30% of each household's total monthly income from the sale of oil palm. Deductions are made over a projected period of seven years, but the actual time period varies according to production levels per household within each site and also varies across sites. The total credit obligation for transmigrants in our sector of the plantation had not yet been determined when I left the field in March, 1994. Total credit charged to transmigrants in nearby sectors of the same plantation were approximately Rp. 7 million, or US\$ 3,390.

¹⁴ In the early years of the transmigration program sites were settled exclusively by transmigrants from Indonesia's inner islands. In an effort to promote the cultural 'assimilation' of indigenous peoples in the receiving areas, the government introduced a policy in 1987 that allocated 10% of the total *packet* in each site to 'local' peoples. This figure was subsequently increased. The government's last 5-year development plan states that approximately 20% of the *packet* in a given site will be allocated to locals and notes that this may be increased depending on local conditions (Departemen Penerangan Republik Indonesia 1994:469).

¹⁵ Key legislation (The Basic Transmigration Act of 1967 and the Basic Agrarian Act of 1960) allows for appropriation of land without compensation and states that local systems governing landownership will be overridden if they conflict with the goals of national development and the transmigration program.

adjacent plantations are a recurring problem in the estate areas. During the time of my field research both types of conflict were occurring in the Tanah Putih site; PTP IV was involved in legal disputes with a nearby plantation over estate boundaries and many families in the site had not yet received their allocation of land for food crops due to unresolved land disputes with local landowners.¹⁶

The perception that the outer islands are 'vacant' is based on disparities in population densities between Java and the outer islands. Traditional land-use patterns based on swidden agriculture and the population densities which these can viably support do not enter into these calculations. This should be understood in light of particular definitions of 'development',¹⁷ as well as political and economic interests which inform official policies aimed at eliminating swidden cultivation in the outer islands.¹⁸

Intense competition for land in the site has had numerous effects. Land prices have risen dramatically over the last five years. Although sale of land

¹⁶ PTP IV has proposed a deduction in the total credit obligation of households in these sectors if they are unable to resolve the dispute, but these site participants rejected the proposed amount (Rp. 280,000 or approximately US\$ 136.00 per household) as inadequate compensation for the value of the land. Because land designated for food crops is typically used for crop diversification, households which do not receive this allocation of land face a significant loss in potential income from the sale of cash crops. As they are forced to purchase nearly all food items, these households also experience a significant increase in living expenses. Food prices are high due to the distance from local markets and poor on-site road conditions which make it difficult to transport produce or other goods into the site. This situation also applies to some families who have been allocated for food crops. Due to non-uniform site conditions, many of these landholdings are partially inundated with swamp water and cannot be cultivated. Even greater difficulties arise for those families whose palm oil holdings are in low-lying swamp areas.

¹⁷ Under the New Order government, the state has assigned paramount importance to development and 'economic rights'. Acknowledging that development efforts, as currently implemented, frequently entail the circumscription of civil and political rights, the state has argued for and legislated a definition of rights based on the 'national' or 'public' interest. Emphasis on national stability as a precondition for economic growth has been a persistent feature of development discourse in Indonesia since its Independence. Although recently under discussion, the participation of the military has been viewed as indispensable to the development process. See Lubis 1993 for an insightful analysis of the principle models and concerns which structure Indonesia's development ideology. On the 'dual function' of the military and its role in economic development, see Crouch 1978 and Lubis 1993.

¹⁸ As Dove 1985 has argued, swidden cultivators measure productivity according to returns on labor not land. Extensive cultivators will, therefore, resist government-directed efforts to shift to more labor-intensive cultivation techniques unless forced to do so by increases in population densities or by government policy. Government efforts to eliminate swidden cultivation are seen as essential to national security, and include a resettlement program administered by the Department of Social Affairs; see Direktorat Bina Masyarakat Terasing 1987. Interviews with DEPSOS officials involved in resettlement indicate that these efforts are rarely successful. Interestingly, many swidden cultivators have sold their *packet* in the transmigration sites to in-migrants from North Sumatra.

in the transmigration sites is formally prohibited, a complex set of 'informal' arrangements and relationships governing these transactions is continually being renegotiated. Many North Sumatrans have lost large sums of money to unscrupulous agents and government officials who assured them of obtaining land in the site. This situation has resulted in mass demonstrations, occupation of transmigrants' housing and lands, numerous violent assaults and the disappearance and/or dismissal of several local officials. Local landowners who obtained letters entitling them to purchase *packet* as compensation for lands affected by site development have also been targets of violence.¹⁹ This has occurred due to the activities of middlemen who purchased the letters, reproduced them, and proceeded to sell each letter to multiple buyers. In the Tanah Putih site this resulted in over 2,000 claimants for less than 200 *packet* of land.

It should be emphasized that many local landowners whose lands were appropriated for site development received no compensation whatsoever. Faced with hundreds of claims, PTP IV provided compensation only to those owners with formal certificates of landownership whose holdings were two or more hectares in size. Those who succeeded in obtaining compensation were paid Rp. 35,000. (approximately US\$ 17.00) per hectare for land planted with mature rubber holdings,²⁰ and were also given the option to purchase one *packet* in the Tanah Putih site for every two hectares of land used for site development.²¹

Unintended Outcomes: Ethnic Heterogeneity and Tensions

Despite financial obstacles and government policy intended to restrict the number of Sumatrans in the resettlement sites, there are many families from the neighboring province of North Sumatra who have succeeded in obtaining *packet* in the Tanah Putih site employing one of the following strategies: (1) payments made through 'unofficial' channels; (2) purchase from transmigrants returning to their home communities; (3) purchase from local landowners who received *packet* as compensation for lands affected by site development; (4) the strategy employed by Bu Sri and Pak Yatno, requiring a substantial sum of money and a trip to Java to obtain falsified documents.

The acquisition of *packet* by Sumatrans means that the actual proportion of Sumatrans to Javanese in the research site is approximately half the total population, or twice the number intended by the state. This unintended heterogeneity has numerous implications. First, a substantial sum of

¹⁹ Many of these landowners were not interested in purchasing land in the transmigration site and chose to sell these letters.

²⁰ This sum is intended as a token payment (*uang sagu hati*) rather than compensation for the actual market value of their land.

²¹ Landowners who exercised the option to purchase a *packet* were subject to the same credit burden per *packet* as transmigrants in the site.

money is needed to acquire a *packet* through any of the strategies outlined above. As transmigrants are almost without exception from among the poorest segments of rural society, this introduces significant economic stratification into the site. Second, many Sumatrans who own *packet* do not actually reside in the site. These absentee landlords generally employ wage laborers or tenants to work their holdings, most of whom are also in-migrants from North Sumatra. The plight of these workers is, in general, extremely precarious and their economic situation often mirrors that of the most impoverished households in rural Java.²²

Since a wage laborer or tenant is frequently employed to tend more than one *packet*, there is also a large number of vacant houses in the site. Vulnerable to the whims of their landlords, population turnover among these workers is high. Turnover is also very high among transmigrants, as many resettled families sell their holdings and return to Java. Both the extreme transience of the population and the large number of vacant houses have had a negative impact on attempts to establish social relations in the site. They are also frequently cited by both locals and transmigrants as significant contributing factors to high crime rates in the estate area.²³

Large-scale in-migration and the increasing heterogeneity that this entails has also had profound implications for religious relations in the site. Whereas a majority of the Javanese transmigrants are Muslim, many North Sumatrans in the site are Christian. Worship facilities are not provided for the latter and, at the time of my research, all petitions for land to build a church had been declined. In contrast, there were two large mosques in the site and many neighborhood groups had successfully petitioned for land to construct small Islamic worship facilities, or *musyolla*. Such discrepancies have produced strong religious tensions which threatened to erupt into full-scale violence during Christmas of 1993.

The Islamic community in the site has experienced significant internal tensions arising from differences in cultural and religious beliefs and

²² In one sense the internal stratification among Sumatrans created by the emergence of a Sumatran landlord class may act to cross-cut ties based on ethnicity. Conversely, to the degree that these tenancy arrangements are perceived as relationships of patronage ethnic ties may be reinforced.

²³ Theft of oil palm from the holdings of transmigrants, PTP IV, and neighboring plantations is routine. Theft of transmigrant's personal property and company property is also extremely common. During the period of my field research, there were two separate occasions on which a person was robbed and murdered in the estate area. As noted above, there were also several violent assaults on persons perceived to be involved in the illicit sale of *packet* and many people suspected of such activities were forced to flee the area. PTP IV operates a private security force in the site. According to company officials (private communication), it is up to their discretion whether to turn a particular case over to the local police or treat it as an internal matter. PTP officials informed me that they are reluctant to involve the local police, as they may then be obligated to travel some distance to the district capital to attend court hearings.

practices. Unfortunately, these tensions are frequently expressed in terms of ethnic categories. This was most clearly seen in the case of the women's weekly Islamic study group (*wirid*) in my neighborhood. The group included both Sumatrans and Javanese when initially formed. However, a group of Sumatrans subsequently split off to form their own group composed exclusively of 'locals'. Informants in the locals' group attributed the split to different attitudes regarding the purpose of the *wirid* group. Whereas the group should be devoted exclusively to religious study, they explained, many Javanese were using the weekly gathering for primarily 'social' purposes.

Analysis of this conflict serves to illustrate some of the obstacles encountered when culturally informed practices and institutions in the community of origin are renegotiated and reinvented in the transmigration site.²⁴ It further suggests that critiques of the transmigration program as a vehicle for 'Islamicization' may need to incorporate a more complex understanding of regional differences in the understanding and practice of Islam.²⁵ For example, although 90 percent of the people in my research village in central Java identify themselves as Muslim, most adults in Tepus do not fast during the holy month of Ramadan, do not perform daily prayers (*sholat*) and do not attend *wirid* groups. Participation in these and most other Islamic activities is linked to stages in the life cycle; children and teenagers are likely to be involved but, with the exception of formal and informal religious leaders, most adults cease to participate in these activities after marriage.²⁶ In contrast, it is rare for Muslims from North Sumatra living in the Tanah Putih site not to observe the Ramadan fast. Most of these adults routinely attend one or more weekly *wirid* groups and perform at least some of the daily prayers. Once relocated to Riau, many Javanese transmigrants feel enormous pressure to reconstruct their religious practices in accordance with that of their Sumatran neighbors. Ironically, their attempts to do so may inadvertently accentuate rather than mitigate religious differences, as in the case of the *wirid* group described here.

²⁴ One example of this concerns the *slametan*, a ritual meal which, for many Javanese, constitutes the heart of their religious system. There were two occasions during my field research on which a Javanese hosting the weekly *wirid* group combined the study meeting with a *slametan* marking a major life event. In the first instance this was the birth of a grandchild; in the second it was to ensure the safe journey of a departing guest. In each instance the *slametan* elicited criticism from Sumatrans who viewed it as inappropriate activity for the *wirid* group.

²⁵ For discussion of charges that the transmigration program is viewed by the central government as a useful vehicle for 'Islamicization', see Guinness 1977; Gondowarito 1986:45; Hardjono 1977; Oey 1982; Osborne 1985; and Suratman and Guinness 1977. For a refutation of these charges, see Aditjondro 1986.

²⁶ For these adults, a ritual communal meal or *slametan* constitutes the primary religious activity. On the import of the *slametan* in Javanese social and religious life, see Geertz 1960.

Impact on Host Communities: The Case of Bagan Sinembah

Large-scale in-migration and increasing heterogeneity also has far-reaching implications for political, economic and social life in neighboring communities. The impact of the Tanah Putih site can be illustrated by recent developments in Bagan Sinembah, the village closest to the plantation. According to village informants, Bagan Sinembah was founded by in-migrants from North Sumatra and the Kubu region of Riau who began cultivating rubber in this area during the 1920s. With the development of the oil palm plantations over the last decade, village boundaries have been redrawn and now encompass several thousand transmigrants and an equal number of in-migrants from North Sumatra. This has greatly diminished the political power of villagers originating from Kubu who consider themselves the *putra daerah* or indigenous inhabitants of this region. This loss of political power was clearly demonstrated in the most recent election for village head in which a candidate from Kubu whose family had held this position for many years was defeated by an in-migrant from North Sumatra of Javanese descent.

During the boom period of rubber production in the early 1970s Bagan Sinembah emerged as the primary economic and administrative center for this region. Development of the Tanah Putih transmigration site began in the early 1980s and involved large expanses of villagers' lands. Today, loss of their rubber holdings has virtually destroyed the village's economic base. At the peak of rubber production Bagan Sinembah produced over 100 tons of lump rubber per month; in 1994 production fluctuated between six and ten tons per month.

Internal stratification in the village has clearly influenced the outcome for particular landowners in pressing claims to compensation for lands affected by plantation development. Not surprisingly, large landowners as well as those with family members or close associates holding political office have fared relatively well. This is rather dramatically illustrated by the success of one large landowner who obtained 37 *packet* in the site in compensation for his rubber holdings. Village smallholders, on the other hand, generally lack the resources required to maneuver within formal and informal bureaucratic and legal channels and, as pointed out earlier, many of these landowners received no compensation.

The primary response to the loss of villagers' lands and economic base has been out-migration. At the time of my field research in 1994, village informants estimated that approximately 70 percent of Bagan Sinembah's former inhabitants had out-migrated over the last ten years. Most of the 33 households that remained had at least one family member living outside the village. There are numerous other changes that demonstrate the extent of the village's economic decline. In 1988 Bagan Sinembah hosted a weekly market which attracted traders from North Sumatra, Kubu and numerous nearby settlements. Its main street was lined with foodstalls and foodshops

that served the large labor force working the rubber holdings. At the time of my field research, the weekly market had been closed for approximately two years and all six foodstalls had gone out of business. Two small foodshops remained. Enrollment in the village's primary school had dropped nearly two-thirds, from 150 students in 1986 to approximately 60 students. Many homes had been dismantled and relocated, or simply left vacant and allowed to fall into disrepair. With the redrawing of village boundaries, the village hall was moved to a location outside the former village.

The Economic Picture: Prospects and Realities

Ironically, tensions between Javanese and Sumatrans in Riau are clearly linked to the government's success in improving the living standards of transmigrants in sites established over the last ten years. Previously transmigrants relocated under the *transmigrasi umum* model were transported to purportedly 'vacant' lands and expected to produce as independent subsistence farmers. Conditions in such sites were, in general, extremely difficult and incomes were frequently below the poverty lines established by the government and its donor agencies. Charges that the program was actually transplanting the very conditions of poverty it sought to alleviate were common.

Over the past decade there have been major changes in the program. New transmigration models have been introduced and many settlements are being integrated with plantation development, as in the Tanah Putih site. Transmigrants on these plantation schemes are growing cash crops, the most lucrative of which are oil palm and rubber. The intense competition for *packet* in these sites is clearly attributable to the perceived improvement in long-term economic prospects for settlers in these plantation schemes.

It is important to note that actual long-term prospects are uncertain. Average household incomes in the oil palm sites are extremely low during the first 5 to 7 years after resettlement.²⁷ Due to non-uniform site conditions, there are significant differences in oil palm yields per household within sites. In addition to this intrasite variation, there are significant differences in production levels and household incomes when comparing across sites.²⁸ Despite such disparities and persistent seasonal fluctuations

²⁷ According to PTP IV, the average monthly net income of smallholders in the Tanah Putih site during the financial year 1992/93 was as follows: Rp. 85,000 (US\$ 41.00) for those with holdings planted in 1986/87; Rp. 236,000 (US\$ 114.00) for those with holdings planted in 1984/85; Rp. 195,000 (US\$ 94.00) for those with holdings planted in 1983/84. See PT Perkebunan IV Gunung Pamela 1992:1.

²⁸ Unfortunately, candidates for resettlement rarely have access to such information. Stories of oil palm transmigrants with fistfuls of money circulate in the markets of both Java and Sumatra. In Sumatra, these stories generate competition for land in the sites and also fuel resentment of transmigrants and the transmigration program itself. In Java, such stories are invoked in the construction of idealized visions of Sumatra as

in productivity, most households do experience a gradual increase in income as the trees mature.

There are, however, several factors that may have an impact on the long-term economic prospects of smallholders in the oil palm sites. Relying on a single crop, household incomes are extremely vulnerable to price fluctuations in the global market. In Pir Khusus sites such as Tanah Putih the risk of monocrop dependency is increased by the requirement that all oil palm be sold to the corporation, thereby eliminating the role of competition in regulating prices. Lastly, oil palm becomes non-productive after a period of approximately 12 to 15 years. It remains to be seen whether smallholders in these sites will be able to cope with the high costs of replanting their holdings.

Despite the somewhat optimistic perceptions regarding the long-term prospects for families in the oil palm sites, there are a large number of transmigrants who sell their holdings and return to Java. Although there are numerous reasons for this,²⁹ escalating land prices are certainly a significant factor, providing a strong incentive for transmigrants to sell their *packet*. A field survey of 567 households in site sectors L and M showed that only one-third of the *packet* were still occupied by the original settlers and many had changed owners several times since the first families were settled in these sectors in September 1990.³⁰ Although some families left the site shortly after relocation, the outflow of returning transmigrants does not appear to be decreasing over time despite some increase in household incomes.

Reconceptualizing Place and Identity

In recent years anthropologists have become increasingly sensitive to the problems implicit in the artificial imposition of boundaries required to delimit any area of study. However, we still face the disciplinary challenge of devising new conceptual and methodological approaches that allow us to incorporate the workings of large-scale political, economic and social processes into our understandings of societies that are studied at the local level. This can be seen in studies of population movement in which neglect

a land where palm oil 'flows like a river'.

²⁹ Interviews with former transmigrants suggest numerous factors influencing their decision to return to Java. Among the most frequently cited are: 1. illness and/or concern for the health of elderly parents in Java; 2. repeated and/or serious illness of family members living in the site; 3. fear for their safety; 4. high crime rates; 5. difficulties with members of other ethnic groups in the site; 6. debts and the difficulty of managing a household budget on a credit basis with extreme fluctuations in household income, and lastly; 7. inadequate educational facilities for their children.

³⁰ Details on the current status of all housing were as follows: 190 houses were occupied by the original settlers; 364 were occupied by a new owner, a tenant, or were vacant; there were 13 cases in which neither the current occupant nor the owner could be established.

of the cultural, social and economic links established through inter-island migration artificially constructs two separate entities from what is more accurately viewed as a single interconnected system.³¹

The dual-site research strategy employed in this research project was intended to allow me to closely attend to linkages created through population movement between Tepus and Tanah Putih. In the section below I will briefly examine how such linkages are maintained, focusing on the important role these relationships play in sustaining a sense of group identity among Javanese transmigrants and members of their home communities.

Theorists of collectively based or group identities have frequently emphasized a shared sense of belonging to and embeddedness within a specific social and geographical place.³² Yet, the strong sense of identity as Javanese that I observed among transmigrants living in Sumatra suggests that collective ties are not necessarily attenuated by geographical separation. This apparent contradiction forces us to examine more closely the implications of movement and of place for our notions of identity. How, one can ask, do Javanese villagers living in Sumatra experience and actively reconstitute their sense of identity?

One aim of this discussion is to challenge received understandings of identity that equate space, place and identity. As Gupta and Ferguson (1992) have recently argued, the experiences of those who inhabit the borders of our spatial grids live a life of border crossings, or permanently cross such borders that cannot be encompassed by theories which simply map cultural groups or identity onto bounded geographical space. For Javanese transmigrants in Sumatra, the disjuncture between physical space and culture is a poignant reality. Their experiences allow us to explore the ways in which communities may be imagined across physically separate but interconnected spaces.

My research in Tepus and Tanah Putih indicates that movement between the transmigration site and the home community plays a critical role in actively refiguring a sense of shared identity among Javanese living outside Java and also enables them to maintain strong ties to their home communities. The value that transmigrants place on sustaining these linkages is evidenced by the fact that any savings that they manage to accumulate in Sumatra are typically used to finance a visit to Java. Movement between the Tanah Putih transmigration site and home communities in Java is continuous. Through their frequent visits, transmigrants continue to participate in the social and economic life of their villages, keeping abreast of changes and gossip, occasionally purchasing livestock and negotiating arrangements for their care, and often retaining membership in

³¹ For an interesting alternative, see Bruner 1984. Bruner suggests that it may be more useful to conceive of migrant's homelands and places of destination as foci of relationships rather than specific localities.

³² See Gupta and Ferguson 1992 for a powerful critique.

various formal and informal organizations. It is rare for transmigrants from Tepus to sell any lands owned prior to their departure from Java, and arrangements made for its cultivation in their absence also play a key role in sustaining ties with their home community.³³ For many families, arrangements for their children's education also serves to strengthen relations with their home communities. When educational facilities in a transmigration site are lacking or inadequate, many parents choose to leave one or more school-age children in the care of family members in Java.³⁴ In this situation, one or both parents usually returns to Java at least once a year. For many families this separation becomes intolerable and the decision is made to leave Sumatra permanently. It is ironic that inadequate education should motivate return movement to Java, as the desire to finance their children's education is one of the most frequently cited factors underlying the decision to transmigrate.

There are a significant number of former transmigrants to Sumatra who have permanently returned to Tepus over the years. The exchange of information about conditions in Sumatra contributes to a sense of shared experience among former and visiting transmigrants and also plays a crucial role in encouraging chain migration. Although new out-migrants are not resettled in the same site as friends or family members already living in Sumatra, most families do resettle in Riau. Due to the linkages between the two regions described here, the vast majority of families leaving Tepus request resettlement in Riau and are unwilling to relocate to destinations in other provinces, despite considerable pressure from local transmigration officials seeking to fulfill resettlement targets in Kalimantan and Irian Jaya. Links between transmigration sites in Riau are also strong, with frequent visits by family members occasioned by births, weddings, illnesses or other major ritual celebrations and life events.

It is very common for one or more close family members to accompany a visiting transmigrant back to Sumatra for an extended visit of two or more months. In many instances, these visits provide a powerful incentive to

³³ Although lands in Tepus may be rented out, they are typically cultivated by a family member. It should be emphasized that some families owned no land prior to their departure and, for all families, landholdings were insufficient to meet their household's subsistence needs. Informants from Tepus frequently explained that no one would consider transmigrating if their household could subsist on its landholdings in Java.

³⁴ Due to lack of coordination between the various departments and agencies involved in site development and settlement, it is not uncommon for families to be settled in a site months before primary school facilities are completed. The children of the first families to be settled in the Tanah Putih site attended classes in a vacant house for seven months until a primary school was completed. Even in long-established sites, junior high schools are frequently not within commuting distance and children must board near their schools. Despite these difficulties, it should also be pointed out that, for most families transmigrating from Tepus, financing an education for their children beyond the primary school level is only possible after resettlement.

transmigrate. This is particularly true for young unmarried males with few job prospects in their home communities. Having visited one or more sites, they frequently return to Java in search of a bride and go back again to Sumatra as transmigrants within a period of a few months or even weeks. The same strategy is sometimes employed by the children of first-generation transmigrants when they reach marriageable age.³⁵

Linkages between sites are also established by those transmigrants who have learned to work the system. Although charges of repeated transmigration are exaggerated by some transmigration officials and by many Sumatrans resentful of the program, it is nevertheless true that a number of transmigrants sell or rent out their holdings in a site, return to Java, and subsequently sign up to transmigrate again. For all those who transmigrate from Tepus to Sumatra the decision is made with the knowledge that, contrary to official policy and government expectations, it need not be a permanent move. For many transmigrants the long-term plan, even at the time of their departure for Sumatra, is to return to Java.

Allocation of Resources and the Politics of Identity

In concluding this paper, I would like to briefly outline the relevance of these research findings for our understanding of the relationship between state-sponsored population movement and the politicization of identity. The allocation of state revenues, development funds, land, and services to transmigration sites in Sumatra is deeply resented among Sumatrans in Riau, many of whom criticize the program as a new form of 'colonization' by the politically dominant Javanese. As the use of this term indicates, such charges must be viewed within a larger context of regional imbalances in the national distribution of political power, revenues and resources, which are a long-standing source of friction in relations between the central government and its provinces.³⁶ In many of the receiving provinces expend-

³⁵ As pointed out above, the transmigration program has been promoted as a solution to the interrelated problems of increasing population densities, landlessness, and rural poverty in Indonesia's inner islands. It is highly ironic that these problems are being replicated in the transmigration sites when the children of first-generation transmigrants mature and seek to establish independent households. The lack of land set aside for the children of first-generation migrants has contributed to increasing rates of rural to urban migration as many of these second-generation migrants leave the sites to seek employment in urban centers with high rates of unemployment and overburdened infrastructure. For further discussion see Davis and Garrison 1988; Hardjono 1977; McDonald and Sontosudarmo 1976; Oey 1978, 1982; and Tjondronegoro 1982.

³⁶ Although Indonesia's outer island provinces provide most of the nation's natural resources and export earnings, revenues generated in these provinces are largely under the control of the central government. Similarly, despite some efforts toward decentralization, political and fiscal authority to determine development policies and allocation of development funds is concentrated in Jakarta. In several outer island provinces, including Riau, resentments generated by constraints on the autonomy of the provincial government have surfaced during recent elections for the office of the

itures for transmigration account for one-third to almost half of the total budget for provincial development.³⁷ Although tensions are highest in those communities directly affected by the settlements, criticism of the program as a formalized policy of favoritism benefiting the Javanese transmigrants – often referred to by these critics as ‘Suharto’s children’ – was pervasive throughout those areas of the province that I visited in the course of this research.

The fact that those Javanese participating in the transmigration program are largely landless poor and are relatively disempowered in relation to the state does little to alleviate such resentments. The development of strategies enabling some Sumatrans to acquire land in the sites does not alter the basic fact that eligibility for the program is based on area of origin, nor that the majority of those obtaining land in Sumatra through the program are Javanese. Few Sumatrans working as wage laborers or tenants on the plantation sites have the necessary financial resources or social ties required to obtain a *packet*. Living and working on the same plantation estates with transmigrants, their ineligibility for the program produces extreme dissatisfaction with official policies and constitutes a serious source of tension between transmigrants and locals in the estate areas.

These resentments are generally expressed in terms of ethnic categories. The categories of ‘Sumatran’ and ‘Javanese’, it may be argued, are in some respects a product of reinvention in this particular economic and political context. People in both Java and Sumatra typically draw highly specific and resonant distinctions between peoples originating from different areas of their respective islands. However, the categories constructed by these distinctions are frequently superseded in the transmigration site by the larger categories which oppose ‘Javanese’ and ‘Sumatrans’.

I am not suggesting that ethnic identity is all-encompassing nor that other foci of identity cease to have meaning. ‘Identity’ is plural, multi-faceted, and above all, mutable. In the Tanah Putih site, other parameters of difference and identity persist, including those of class, religion, kinship and gender. However, identities emerge through a creative process that is deeply contextual in nature and involves ongoing negotiation within particular social, economic, and political domains.³⁸ My point is that, within

governor. There is a wide body of literature dealing with these regional imbalances. For a comprehensive overview of these regional disparities see Drake 1989:145-84. Also see the contributions by Al azhar and Will Derks to this volume.

³⁷ Looking at Riau in particular, expenditures for transmigration accounted for 24.0% of the total provincial development budget between 1979 and 1982; by 1985 this figure had increased to 35.8%. See Davis and Garrison 1988:80-2.

³⁸ See Koentjaraningrat 1967 for a discussion of the interplay between locally based and national loyalties in Indonesia which traces the multiple ‘fields of social relations’ in which collectively based loyalties may emerge. For further discussions of the plural, shifting, and sometimes contradictory nature of identity see Anzaldúa 1987; Clifford 1988; Depres 1984; Horowitz 1975; 1985; Kondo 1990; and Steedman 1987.

the context of the transmigration site, ethnic categories of difference are invested with new political and economic significance due to the state's allocation of resources to non-Sumatrans resettled in Sumatra.

The increasing salience of ethnicity in the Tanah Putih site provides support for a theoretical approach that argues that ethnic and racial divisions may emerge or be politicized as result of a group's differential incorporation in a public domain if this, in turn, determines their access to 'entitlements'³⁹ administered by the state. Tensions generated by the election of the village head in Bagan Sinembah described above are one example of how the politicization of ethnic categories may be expressed in formal political domains. A recent proposal by the governor of Riau that the current allocation of *packet* to local families be increased from 20 percent to 50 percent provides a further example of such politicization.⁴⁰

If correct, this interpretation of the relationship between state policy and the politicization of ethnic categories has important policy implications for a government which is actively seeking to promote national integration through a program that formally institutionalizes such differences. Evidence on ethnic tensions in other transmigration sites shows that the conflicts described here are not unique to the Tanah Putih site.⁴¹

Conclusion

The notion that redistribution of Indonesia's population provides an effective means of promoting 'national identity' is one of the most fundamental assumptions underlying the transmigration program. This assumption is based largely on comparison with situations of ethnic heterogeneity that have been produced by spontaneous migration. Unfortunately, this

³⁹ The term 'entitlements' is taken from Horowitz 1985 and Tambiah 1989. Both authors emphasize the role of entitlements in claims for legitimacy made by competing ethnic groups. Tambiah 1989:345 has defined entitlements as claims '(1) to capacities and "symbolic capital" such as education and occupation, (2) to material rewards such as incomes and commodities, and sumptuary privileges that enable distinct styles of life, and (3) to "honors" such as titles and offices, markers of ethnic or national pride, and religious and linguistic precedence and esteem.' For further discussion of the role of the state in the politicization of ethnicity, see Ronen 1986 and Smith 1984.

⁴⁰ Personal communication with officials at the district transmigration office for Bengkalis, province of Riau. A decision on this proposal had not yet been reached when I left Riau in March of 1994.

⁴¹ See Guinness 1977; 1982; Gondowarsito 1986:45; Hardjono 1977; Oey 1978; 1982; Osborne 1985; Suratman and Guinness 1977; Swasono 1969; and Wahana Informasi Masyarakat 1994. Points of conflict discussed by these authors include: land appropriation; inadequate compensation to members of the host community whose lands are impacted by site development; resentments regarding financial resources, facilities, and extension services provided to transmigrants but not to members of the host communities; and lastly cultural, social and religious differences (including, for example, diet and the raising of pigs) that are frequently articulated in terms of ethnicity.

neglects critical issues of state intervention and allocation of resources.

The organized movement of peoples is not simply an issue of demographics. As this discussion has shown, it is also a profoundly political phenomenon involving strategies of control and administration by the state and its various organs, the competing interests and aims of donor agencies and private investors, and competition for resources at the local, regional and national levels. Large-scale in-migration by members of other ethnic groups and the increasing heterogeneity that this entails for a given receiving community has far-reaching implications for local politics. As it is rarely the case that land that can be cultivated is truly 'vacant', resettlement typically involves conflict over appropriation of local lands.

This paper advances the argument that Indonesia's efforts to promote national integration risk being undermined by policies and programs that reinforce the perception that the most useful political distinctions vis-à-vis the state are ethnic ones. On a theoretical level, the politics of identity and community described here challenge us to fully attend to critical issues of difference in our formulations of national identity. From this perspective, it is important not only to ask how a sense of national identity is fostered but, equally crucial, to ask the related questions, 'Who participates in this identity? Who is excluded?' Addressing these questions in the context of state-sponsored resettlement, this research suggests that we can expect the participation of particular groups of people in the 'imagined community' of the nation to be significantly influenced by their relative access to and/or control over resources allocated by the state.

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