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Citizenship and local practices of rule in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT
Citizenship develops in relation to the specific way in which the colonial state and local societies reshaped each other. This article traces the history of that relationship in Indonesia over the last two hundred years. At first, a central colonial state with insufficient resources to enforce its will negotiated halfway accords with a host of local rulers. Villagers 'belonged' to their patrimonial ruler, with the choice to submit or run away. By the early twentieth century, the state began to develop its technical means to bring about major economic and social changes, but only in densely populated areas with agrarian potential. Capitalism there began to disrupt village life and loosen clientelistic bonds. An indigenous constituency emerged for relatively autonomous citizenship. After independence in 1945, state politics there were (left-)populist rather than liberal. Where the state had fewer interests, however, the central state presence remained thin. The nineteenth century halfway house was reinvented and stabilized. Local leaders more easily gained monopolistic control over economic resources, allowing them to enforce clientelistic forms of citizenship. Central state elites were happy to grant local autonomy there, since it also relieved them from direct citizen pressure on their own prerogatives.

Introduction

In the interior of Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo), citizens in 2015 willingly vote for a tycoon who poisons the air by burning the forest for his oil palm plantations, because he pays for their vote. In the Javanese harbour city of Surabaya in 2010, by contrast, they throw out a corrupt mayor in favour of a professional woman who stands up to the tycoons and creates green city spaces. Is there a pattern here? Do citizens in some parts of Indonesia engage more often in communitarian and clientelistic politics, while in others their politics can best be described as 'post-clientelist'? Studies quoted below do indeed suggest this. They raise the question why this is so. Like many other formally democratic states, Indonesia apparently has regions that sustain 'subnational authoritarianism'. In Indonesia, such regions are over-represented in the thinly populated but expansive 'outer islands' (as

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the commonplace designation has it, though we can quibble over its exact boundaries). We more often observe citizens dependent on personal relations to access state services there than elsewhere. In the (equally stereotypical) ’heartlands’ of Java and parts of Sumatra, by contrast, citizenship politics more commonly appear to be driven by ideas of the common good than by personal favouritism. The present article aims to historicize in a sweeping way the regional variation in citizenship patterns we observe in today’s Indonesia. The argument will be that a short but intense history of state formation – a ‘micropolitics of the localities’ as one researcher calls them – has constituted a pattern of citizenship practices that is spatially differentiated.

The task of historicizing citizenship in the global south has only just begun. Those who have ventured there – including some scholars interested in subnational authoritarianism – often focus on the history of relations between elite interests at the national (or colony-wide) and the sub-national levels. While Mann’s (1987) assertion that citizenship is mainly the outcome of elite strategies frequently rings true, however, the reality in postcolonial states is better seen as more dialectical. A recent set of articles edited by Lund (2016) argues convincingly that states and citizens mutually constitute each other through a series of historical ruptures. As yet we have little idea how to identify the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial ’citizen’. Going back in history, they tend to disappear into tribes and colonial subjects. Even today, we hardly know how to distinguish individuals who act like ‘citizens’ with interests of their own, from ‘clients’ who simply follow powerful patrons.

The essay proceeds in five steps. The first section develops theoretical insight by recovering the contested, political dimensions of Indonesia’s history of state formation. The next three sketch a history of citizenship in what was to become Indonesia over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The argument throughout is that citizenship develops in relation to the specific way in which the colonial state and local societies reshaped each other. Three key collective actors vied for influence: central state authorities, local authorities and emerging citizen collectivities. At certain moments, contention among them reached a pinnacle. This led each time to a new, relatively stable social pact among citizens on the one hand, and between citizens and the state on the other. This agreement, either open or tacit, produced what has been called a ’citizenship regime’. Not only the intentions of each party shaped the outcome to that contention, but also the resources each brought to it. A final section concludes.

How to historicize local citizenship regimes?

When great swathes of Latin America abandoned the authoritarianism of the 1980s, Fox (1994a, 107) was one of the first to notice how unevenly democracy was being practised around the respective national territories:

[...]lected civilian regimes rule nationally, but the societies over which they preside are honey-combed with local authoritarian enclaves ... Most Latin American parties still fail to represent the poorest, especially the rural poor and indigenous peoples, often leaving them subject to local bosses.

By the 2010s, subnational authoritarianism had emerged as ‘a vibrant field of study ... experiencing the crystallization of a shared language and frame of reference’ (Sidel 2014, 163). Scholars pointed to the legacy of authoritarian local cultures, perhaps sustained by poverty. Local elites even deliberately held back economic growth in order to enjoy continued
benefits from clientelist politics (Chubb 1982). Others sought the cause in the centre-periphery relation itself. Local political arenas, inherently less competitive than national ones, were easily hijacked by prominent local families. Central states unwittingly strengthened these families with subsidies, which allowed local elites to ignore their constituencies (Gervasoni 2010). When new democracies also choose to decentralize, as Indonesia has done, such dynamics could actually exacerbate subnational authoritarianism.

Other contributions to the present edition show that we recognize such mechanisms in Indonesia too. But when we ask how they could arise out of a situation – little more than a century ago – when there was no modern state at all, we are almost completely in the dark. And underneath it all runs a suspicion that we miss something by focusing only on elite interests.

Africanists have done much to connect the history of state formation with that of citizenship. Herbst (2000) put forward an historical explanation for the prevalence of warlordism outside the economic heartlands of the colonies. In Europe’s phase of state formation, territorial control was the driving dynamic. Central state elites were forever at war with their neighbours over land. To finance these wars, they built strong institutions to control and tax their citizens. In Africa, by contrast, land was of little value; colonial state formation involved little warfare over borders. Central state elites had little motivation to build strong institutions to crush opposition or tax their citizens. Low investment in building institutions led to the continued strength of local citizenship dynamics. Other work has richly illustrated the consequences of this state-building neglect: informal, personalized (clientelized) relations everywhere compensate for dysfunctional state administrations (Reno 1995; Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2006; Lund 2011).

Upon independence, postcolonial central state elites did have incentives to win citizen support, but they looked mainly to the urban areas. Thus, Mamdani (1996, 286) argued that democratization in sub-Saharan Africa was hobbled by a spatial ‘bifurcation’. Contemporary African civil society flourishes in the cities, while communal politics prevail in rural areas. He traced this bifurcation to a postcolonial failure to ‘detribalize’ rural politics. Colonial authorities had at a certain point made the shift ‘from the zeal of a civilizing mission to a calculated preoccupation with holding power, from rejuvenating to conserving society, from being the torchbearers of individual freedom to being custodians protecting the customary integrity of dominated tribes’. Independence activists had perpetuated this frame of mind, creating a ‘bifurcated state’. Rural areas perpetuated a communalized form of ‘decentralized despotism’.

Paralleling a history of artificially sustained ‘tribalized’ politics in rural parts of the colony is a history of poor governance in areas left to traditional rule. Governance indicators today are poorer in those parts of the former British empire with a history of indirect rule than in other areas that were ruled directly (Lange 2004, 917). Lange concluded: ‘Dispersed forms of domination hinder state governance when they create extremely powerful local intermediaries and limit state infrastructural power’. Catherine Boone investigated the comparative historical origins of such dispersed versus concentrated forms of domination in different parts of Africa in the period 1950–70. Underlying her argument was the generally applicable observation that ‘state power is rooted, in part, in the micropolitics of the localities’ (Boone 1998, 25).

Implicit in these histories of ‘bifurcated’ state formation is a notion of citizenship that ought to be further elaborated. What is citizenship, and how can it be historicized? Conventional citizenship definitions are legalistic and thus depend on the rule of law, which
is frequently weak in the global south. They result in the patently absurd conclusion that citizenship is absent there. For where there is no rule of law there can be no legally binding set of mutual rights and obligations between state and citizen. More recently, however, critical discussion of citizenship has returned to ‘the political’. It has revived Aristotle’s statement that ‘a citizen is one who shares in governing and being governed’ (Politics Chapter 3). It sees the political, Aristotelian idea as analytically prior to the Weberian one of a legally guaranteed social contract between city dwellers and the state. Balibar (2015) links citizenship at a fundamental level to the possibility of ‘insurrection’. This opens up new perspectives on citizenship in the global south, where social relations often have a provisional character missing in the north. To compensate for the weakness of the rule of law, all political relations appear to be permanently open to negotiation. Who is ‘in’ or ‘out’ of the political community, and how much of a say those on the margins have in the way decisions are made, is contingent on politics.

We now move – in a necessarily exploratory way – to reconstructing the historical trajectory of citizenship in different Indonesian regions over the last two centuries. These were path-dependent trajectories, in which initial regional differences were reinforced over time.

**Indigenous patrimonialism**

The history of modern citizenship in a postcolonial country like Indonesia starts with the first contact between the colonial creators of the modern state and traditional, patrimonial rulers of the population. Most of the archipelago’s peoples at that moment were ruled by an indigenous king or sultan, who used a ramshackle government apparatus to partially control the population residing within their reach. The modern colonial state and its independent successor came to stand over them and united a much larger area. Dutch colonial power gradually spread and deepened until it had constituted the Netherlands East Indies. Then followed the Japanese military occupation during the Pacific War of 1942–1945. Eventually – following a bloody decolonization war against the returning Dutch – an independent Republic of Indonesia assumed sovereignty over the whole territory of the former Netherlands Indies. However, local rulers have continued to coexist with modern ‘national’ ones from the beginnings of colonial rule to the present day. Under indirect rule the hierarchy between the two was formalized in the late nineteenth century. The relationship has since then been continually revised. A brief federal interlude in Dutch-held areas in the late 1940s, and various decentralization schemes since then, served once more to empower local rulers. A few sultans and kings still exist in Indonesia today, some with political powers. Elected local officials often try to revitalize memories of these kingdoms. At other times, though, local rulers have had their prerogatives severely restricted, as during the New Order of General Suharto (1966–1998). Locally contingent power shifts within this triangle ‘national elites – local elites – local populations’ have thus produced a variety of distinct, regionally heterogeneous citizenship regimes over the span of two centuries.

Most people in the archipelago lived in a small village, typically with a couple of hundred inhabitants. In the terminology Charles Tilly deploys in his book *Trust and Rule* (2005), they belonged to ‘trust communities’. This is one in which people’s ties to others are so intense that, were they to break down, it would cause considerable pain. Here they are customary village communities, riverside clans, ethnic groups who trace their lineage to some indigenous political structure in the past, or religious groups whose identity is somewhat
independent of the national ruler. Local citizenship within such communities was protected by personal ties rather than by legally enforceable rules. Most were hierarchical communities, in which a wealthy few (known in Java as sikep) acted as patrons to the economically dependent (numpang). The small landholders in between had somewhat greater autonomy. Clients were dependent on patrons for their access to land, forest or river resources. Even in the interior of Borneo, where nomadic clans were relatively egalitarian, contact with coastal agricultural societies introduced elements of stratification. Most societies in the archipelago knew slavery. The caste-like category of slave was widely maintained even after the Dutch officially banned the practice in the early nineteenth century.

The indigenous king was the ultimate trader, and all trade was also tribute. Rulers aimed to be monopoly traders, particularly outside Java. Kinship overruled all other relationships. Politics were dynastic. A small cadre of aristocratic administrators related to them by marriage was at court. The most significant kingdom in island Southeast Asia, Mataram in Java, was based on irrigated rice cultivation, visible up to a day’s travel away from the central palace in all directions. Smaller kingdoms existed outside Java too. They were even more personalized than the court in Java.

People related to their local rulers in clientelistic ways that varied from intense (at the court, where aristocrats had some rights to talk back) to tenuous (out in the village). Those near the court were obliged to make labour available in clientelist fashion for everything from harbour works, through harvesting the royal lands, to armed defence. For villagers living some distance from the court, evasion, concealment, and dissimulation were real options. There was plenty of space to flee. They could bribe or dupe visiting tax officials, become roving bandits, or shift to a different patron.

In his overview book on the history of colonial state formation, Newbury (2003) argues convincingly that ‘indirect rule’ is not the correct term for the European practice of working with indigenous chieftains. The term smugly suggests that Europeans at all times retained the final authority. The reality for a long time was that they did not have the capacity to impose their will. They were forced to adapt to an essentially patrimonial precolonial indigenous system. Initially the Dutch, too, despite their superior technology and culture of written contracts, behaved like any other traditional Southeast Asian state. They exploited patron-client links to build alliances against rivals and gain recognition from the local population.

At a certain point in the history, the status hierarchy was reversed. In the Netherlands Indies this took place somewhere between 1885 and 1910 (legal historians debate the precise moment). After that, colonial state authorities did have choices. But, in ways like those described by Boone and Mamdani, the ‘micropolitics of the localities’ continued to constrain their freedom to act.

Immediately after that point, a debate took place among senior colonial bureaucrats about the shape of the state they wanted to build. It raged mainly behind closed doors, yet the logics that pervaded it continue to reverberate to the present day. Conservatives and progressives were found on both sides of the argument (Bongenaar 2005; van Klinken 2006b). Modernizers had little time for the traditional rulers. They wished to create a modern state governing a growing domestic market. That involved closer bureaucratic control (a conservative agenda). But it also meant ameliorative and developmental programmes in health, education, irrigation, agricultural credit, legal certainty, and (later) democracy (more or less progressive ideas). Those who were less impressed with modernity thought tradition should be valued because it offered local communities protection against the destructive
penetration of modern capital and administration (also a progressive idea). But at the same time tradition insulated local communities from emancipatory movements for justice and democracy (which pleased conservatives).

The issue was eventually decided by the pragmatics of retaining control. Shortly after the First World War, an emerging nationalist movement in Java demanding citizenship in the modern state spooked the colonial establishment and strengthened conservatives. The latter, concluding that modernity was disruptive to ‘traditional’ societies, aimed to limit the spread of new ideas and organizations. The prospect of a citizen movement demanding direct access to the central state led them to deliberately enhance local self-rule as a useful safeguard against democracy. By the late 1920s colonial modernists faced growing financial difficulties. Self-governing lands were cheap. A regime of mediated citizenship was now enforced that offered inhabitants neither the social integrity of indigenous rule nor the emancipation of modernity. Colonial interference created ‘kings’ who were more monarchical than they had been before, since the Dutch preferred to deal with just one person rather than the previously common college of rulers. Diffuse, consultative forms of government that had softened rule and permitted ethnic coexistence disappeared. The ‘tyranny’ of the self-rulers, so often decried even then, was to a large extent a colonial effect rather than indigenous.

The colonial choice for a patrimonial, decentralized citizenship regime at the same time meant a choice for repression – for what Rancière (2006) was to call the ‘police’. The traditional deference upon which the system rested could be sustained in the overwhelmingly rural areas of a region like Borneo, but it was already being questioned by republican-minded citizen movements in Java from the late 1920s onwards. An increasingly repressive intelligence apparatus arrested key activists, among them Sukarno (later president). A British observer of Dutch indirect rule practices warned in the 1930s that ‘this extraordinarily difficult task of bringing back to life communities which shall still have the semblance of growing from the soil’ might end in tears. He thought a ‘violent and bloody trial of strength [was] … inevitable … [I]t is difficult to see how the new society can break through the artificially petrified crust of the old traditions without violent conflict’ (Emerson [1937] 1979, 436, 493, 518–9). He was right – the 1945 revolution was precisely about that – but only in Java and parts of Sumatra. In Borneo there was little dissatisfaction with indirect rule even in 1945.

Indonesia’s colonial history had by 1945 culminated in a citizenship regime in which most people had more dealings with authorized local state leaders than with colony-wide bureaucratic or political institutions. These local citizen relations were typically person-alized and clientelistic, sharing continuities with precolonial deference. The central state actually encouraged this type of citizenship, hoping it would short-circuit a colony-wide citizen insurrection.

**Left-populism in heartlands**

Against this backdrop, the national revolution of 1945–1949 constituted an ‘act of citizenship’ (Isin and Nielsen 2008) of gigantic proportions for the whole country. It created a new type of citizen altogether. Yet it took place largely in the heartlands, hardly touching the outer islands. This can be explained in contentious politics terms. In the short term, the contention involved contingencies around the ending of the Pacific War that will be
explained shortly. Of more enduring significance than these military events, however, were long-term processes initiated at least thirty years earlier. In those most densely populated, economically interesting areas of the archipelago that were to become the ‘heartlands’, a capable bureaucratic state had been constructed. Its purpose was to serve (foreign) capital and maintain political stability, but also to create an educated workforce.

The state recognized the mobile clerks and labourers it had created as productive individuals detached from their indigenous trust communities. It accorded them certain political rights of free association as well as responsibilities that went beyond mere membership in an ethnic category. They in turn were alternately intimidated by the repressive capabilities the state directed at some of them and seduced by the emancipatory potential of the new and ‘modern’ state. The state’s resources increasingly mattered more to them than those of their local patrons. New associational forms of power spanning the entire nation grew out of this emerging interaction between modern capital, political organizations, newspapers, proto-parliaments, and a largely indigenous modern administrative corps. Citizenship was constituted through both the repressive and the seductive modalities of that relationship. As the following sketchy history of the build-up to the revolution will illustrate, some Indonesians became insurgents, others loyal protégés, many both in a lifetime.

When considered in terms of its technical governance resources, it was in 1800 hardly possible to speak of a ‘state’. An impersonal, bureaucratic, standardized state apparatus was still nearly a century away. Even by the early twentieth century, however, the colonial bureaucracy exerted its influence much more strongly in Java than in Borneo. Java had been among the longest-standing of colonial enclaves. Its fertile soil had invited exploitation by large plantations with close state connections. From the 1830s onwards, the Cultivation System progressively turned much of Java into a highly profitable plantation. Recruitment of forced labour caused social dislocation. Coffee initially, and sugar by the late nineteenth century, came to dominate the agrarian landscape. After 1870 the state abandoned its initial hands-off attitude, as the desire grew actually to manage both the economy and the population. New direct taxation methods greatly increased revenue. New, clearly defined, formal, and impersonal bureaucratic institutions shot up. Railways, telegraph offices, postal services, toll roads, health and educational services, banks and credit schemes, agricultural extension, urban planning and other technical services expanded rapidly. By 1913, railways spanned Java from one end to the other. Sumatra had short stretches of track, while elsewhere rail was absent altogether (Cribb 2000, chapter 4). Trains on Java carried sugar to the factory, and young villagers to see the city. The first railway workers trade union started in Bandung, in Java, in 1905. Dockworkers, chauffeurs, and domestic servants followed suit. Mainly initiated by (Indo-)European workers, they created an ‘embryonic class consciousness’ among indigenous workers too (Ingleson 1986, 485, 499).

Villagers learned that evasion was no longer an option. Villages in Java became territorialized, intensely governed units. Instead of constantly moving, its members settled in one place and were controlled by landed village chiefs. Forest areas previously available as refuges were enclosed. The police shut down the brigand gangs and religious cult groups that had once been popular among peasants. To these capitalist disruptions to the social fabric were added the political disruptions of war and revolution between 1942 and 1949. These were felt most intensely in the heartlands.

A small but growing indigenous bureaucratic and trading middle class in Java’s towns and cities, meanwhile, grew familiar with state institutions from the inside. A Javanese
aristocratic elite had been writing magazine articles throughout the nineteenth century praising scientific innovation over tradition, and American democracy over native despotism. The first movements for political participation were led by young aristocrats preparing to work in the colonial bureaucracy and impatient to have a say (the Indische Partij).

Javanese traders in Solo, Java, started the first mass political movement in 1919. Sarekat Islam soon claimed two million adherents all over Java, as well as in parts of Sumatra and eastern Kalimantan near Banjarmasin. Initially aimed at supporting indigenous trading cooperatives against ethnic Chinese competition, it soon adopted an explicitly anticolonial stance – directed at the central state. Combining in a hybrid way emancipatory motifs from both Islam and communism for a time, its mass rallies evoked an intoxicating fearlessness, a heroic assertion of personal freedom (Shiraishi 1990). When the colonial regime responded with repression, most of the political prisoners were once more found in Java (Cribb 2000, Fig. 4.76).

The protagonists came from the upwardly mobile embryonic provincial middle class of traders, clerks, teachers, landowners and religious leaders. These were the people who were to lead the republic after the war. Postcolonialist suspicions that Marx and Rousseau had no purchase on minds beyond the West (Chatterjee 2011) overlook the vigour of Asian discursive repertoires that, for all their hybridity, share a common sense of outrage against exploitation. Mobility, literacy and modern forms of political organization went together.

When the Japanese armed forces invaded the archipelago in 1942, the 16th Army was allocated to Java, the 25th to Sumatra and Malaya, and the Navy to the eastern archipelago. While elsewhere the Japanese continued Dutch depoliticizing measures, in Java they took the risk of adopting the opposite approach. They instituted a regime with populist elements in order to appease and involve an already politicized public. A range of mobilizational organizations brought young people into direct contact with the state. In place of aristocrats, they elevated urban intellectuals, cosmopolitans with much ‘weaker’ social ties than the aristocrats had, into key administrative positions. From there this new ruling class came to dominate the independent Republic of Indonesia.

The revolution that broke out upon the Japanese surrender in August 1945 swept over all of that same intensively mobilized Java. Parts of Sumatra also joined in. Allied forces failed to reoccupy these areas in time to prevent massive unrest. Elsewhere the Dutch reoccupied the archipelago without meeting resistance. In several waves of fighting, the Dutch progressively beat back the Republic of Indonesia. But American pressure eventually called the Dutch back, and Indonesia’s independence was internationally acknowledged at the end of 1949.

The revolution for national liberation against the Dutch was at the same time a series of bloody social revolutions directed against the aristocratic bureaucratic corps the foreign powers had always used to administer the colony. All mobilizational processes were local. Overarching national organizations such as political parties, an army, and cabinet authority had limited authority. The most militant actions were led by anarchic youth militias, who filled the vacancy left by the collapse of central authority with their republican activism. They arose from the liminal institutions of the religious schools (pesantren) and banditry (jago) (Anderson 1972). Social change had severed ties these young men and a few women had with village hierarchies. These new trust networks were able to bargain directly with the central state. Upon international recognition of Indonesian independence, the Dutch withdrew from the areas they had reoccupied. The Republic, with considerable popular
support, over the next few years dissolved nearly all the indigenous principalities upon which the Dutch had built their rule.

The 1945–1949 revolution can rightly be seen as a predominantly solidaristic act of citizenship resembling those described by Isin and Nielsen (2008). Everywhere the end of the decolonization war and the establishment of an Indonesian republican government marked a sense that a new social contract had been agreed. As the preface to the 1945 Constitution outlined it, that contract promised freedom, unity, sovereignty, justice and welfare (merdeka, bersatu, berdaulat, adil dan makmur). It involved participation in the state, state protection from international markets seen as predatory, and shared welfare through state-managed economics. Political parties were to provide the link between state and society.

The communist party PKI mobilized more effectively among village youths in Java than anywhere else in Indonesia. The PKI was the only non-clientelist party in Indonesia in the 1950s. With its peasant union BTI, it explicitly aimed to break clientelist bonds and mobilize peasants to organize along class lines. In Tilly’s terms, peasants were to be integrated into the state by the destruction of existing clientelist trust networks in the village, resulting in a direct relationship with the state through the party.

By the 1950s, a substantial citizenry had emerged in the heartlands that was intensely engaged with the central state. A huge number of organizations became vehicles for youth, university alumni, women, professionals or farmers to connect with the state in areas from sports to religion, and from land reform to culture. Most operated like movements in which the collectivity rather than the individual was central. They had successfully decolonized that state, and transformed it into a democratic, populist political community whose legitimating narrative embraced the whole nation. We now turn to the outer islands, where the history of rule produced a different type of citizen. Its exact boundaries for our purposes remain open for discussion. We will focus on Indonesian Borneo, called Kalimantan.

**Clientelism in outer islands**

With a much thinner history of modern governance than in the heartlands, the outer islands have seen citizens stay closer to their local patrons. In large parts of the archipelago, the Dutch never built a strong institutional machine. In thousands of thinly populated islands that barely managed to feed themselves around the periphery, they saw no economic or strategic incentive to do so. They left indirect rule arrangements in place that proved relatively mild and uncontroversial throughout the nineteenth century. In the manner indicated by Herbst in his history of African state formation, the new administrative apparatus and its technology largely bypassed economically uninteresting areas. Highlands and inland areas had no railways, few roads, no telegraph, and few of the offices necessary to carry out modern direct rule. Kalimantan was one of those neglected areas. Its timber riches were to become important only after the 1950s. The only resources the Dutch were willing to commit to the island were some ‘uncouth’ troops tasked to prevent a recurrence of the ‘chronic instability’ of nineteenth century Borneo (Irwin 1955, 1, 216).

The generalized administrative corps (Binnenlands Bestuur) that, initially, represented all of the Netherlands East Indies state presence, was visible only in directly ruled areas (Cribb 2000, Fig. 4.17). In indirectly ruled ones – mainly outside Java – a patchwork of local indigenous administrations took care of their citizens. Their rulers all had aristocratic titles, and most claimed some ‘traditional’ legitimacy. Rivermouth sultans on Borneo’s West and
East coasts were appointed ‘self-rulers’ within the Dutch system. The central part of Borneo was ruled directly, but only because the indigenous people were regarded as too primitive to rule themselves. Even there, as one Dutch administrator put it in 1933, the leading idea was ‘a government-initiated stimulation of ordered community according to principles known in custom (such as consultation, hierarchical representation)’ (van Klinken 2004). In practice, the Dutch constructed a highly inegalitarian local rule system, particularly in far-flung parts of the archipelago beyond Java. They reinvented traditional clientelism into much more authoritarian forms of clientelism (a process also recognized in Latin America, Fox 1994b). But whereas in Java attempts to reify indigenous patrimonial rule led to resistance that required extensive policing, societies in the outer islands remained conservative and on the whole stable under such rule.

The weakness of central state institutions favoured leading local families, who dominated local economic and political arenas, in the way described by Sidel (2014). The result was an ethnicized politics in which local forms of citizenship kept ‘outsiders’ at bay, and elite patronage muted protests by the internal poor. When the first colony-wide steps were taken towards popular representation through the gradual introduction of a People’s Council (Volksraad) from 1918, the principle of representation was ethnic. Mobilization for votes by indigenous elites to enter the Council actually introduced the notion of ethnicity to a popular discourse in Borneo pitting Dayaks against Malays. The rise of ethnic Dayak militancy in recent years thus goes back to colonial reification of ethnic identity. It suggests that the existing riverside trust networks have adapted to modern conditions rather than succumbing to pressure to dissolve. Dutch sponsorship of ethnic politics through the Volksraad, and Dutch religious missions in the interior, produced Dayak elites who increasingly entered into direct negotiations with state agents on the basis that they spoke on behalf of a homogeneous ethnic community. The high degree to which customary hierarchies were preserved in the outer islands was evident in the results of the general election held in 1955 (the first since independence). Religious and localist or ethnic parties dominated outside Java. They won over 50% of the vote everywhere there except in some plantation areas such as on the east coast of Sumatra. They won more votes outside the towns than within them. Such votes probably reflected the predominantly clientelist relations in rural and small-town economies, where diversified modern capital had hardly developed. By contrast, class-based politics, as seen in high votes for the PKI, were strong everywhere within a Java that had been disturbed by the revolution, and in plantation and mining areas outside Java (van Klinken 2014, 159–60).

Central state elites did not always pursue the option of expanding their influence over citizens in the outer island regions at the expense of local authorities, even when they had the capacity to do so. We saw that, in the early twentieth century, the Dutch turned what had been a rather laissez faire system of indirect rule in much of the archipelago into an ideology of state. They deliberately limited (even the prospects of) national citizenship rights for fear that citizens would make insurrectionary demands on them. A kind of apartheid was to be created in the Indies that would preserve tranquility and order (rust en orde). Small modern enclaves would exist amidst a large rural population ruled informally by ethnic chiefs. A similar strategic logic appeared to have been potent (though far from uncontested) even after independence. This was evident in two episodes in which the prevailing citizenship regime once more became a matter for contestation. The first of them took place in 1965 and involved massive deployment of violence. The second occurred in 1999. In both cases, ruling national elites interpreted the choice before them in terms that resembled those that
had been fought out within colonial bureaucratic circles in the 1920s. In both, the fight was
eventually won by those elements within the central state preferring indirect rule solutions
to the challenge posed by rising citizen demands through centralized political parties.

Core to the fights around 1965 was a contest between the military and the president for
the ultimate rule-making authority. Relations with the citizenry were the central issue. The
president favoured a left-populist regime with many echoes of the 1945–1949 Revolution.
His most effective ally became the communist party PKI. It was building cross-class coal-
tions between urban middle classes and the rural poor aiming at integrating citizens directly
with the central state. The military, meanwhile, realizing they were not popular, preferred
to depoliticize citizenship or at best tie it to local communitarian bosses. They repeatedly
showed a preference for building alliances with strongmen leading localist and religious
movements that were hierarchical and culturally conservative.

Guerrilla tactics during the revolution had left the military running a territorial, locally
embedded garrison system. Fearing communist mobilization was outstripping them, army
commanders from the early 1960s began to greatly intensify this system. They instructed
local commanders to build bridges to localist and religious groups who also feared the com-
munists. Clientelist bonds had not been broken to the same irrevocable extent everywhere.
Even in Java, rich farmers, anxious to protect their property, recruited many of their poor
dependents for the anticommunist Islamic organization Nahdatul Ulama. They became
indispensable allies for the military. When on 1 October 1965 some right-wing generals
were kidnapped and killed by conspirators in Jakarta linked to the PKI general secretary,
the military struck back. Together with its civilian allies, the military engaged in a sustained
campaign of murder, imprisonment, and propaganda to permanently eliminate the PKI.
Around half a million were murdered (most were disappeared), while about twice that
number were imprisoned without charges (Kammen and McGregor 2012). This genocide
heralded the beginning of the New Order. Citizenship became largely depoliticized, also
for those groups that had collaborated with the counter-revolution of 1965.

The repression was most violent in the heartlands. A map of the prison camps (Cribb
2000, Fig. 5.35) shows them densely packed around Java, with a smattering in Sumatra
and elsewhere. As the Dutch colonial government had done, the military-dominated New
Order government readily applied the label ‘communist’ to any attempt to bring citizens
directly into contact with the central state through a political party. The state demobilized
the population as much as it could. It did seek direct contact with them in administrative
terms (identity cards, agricultural extension, family planning programs), but would not
allow them to talk back. Only three closely monitored parties were permitted to campaign
in tightly controlled elections.

Yet seduction remained a significant modality of governance alongside the repressive
one. The government Golkar party deployed patronage and local big men to pull in the
votes all over the country. Votes for Golkar indicate the degree of acceptance of New Order
authoritarianism. Golkar became ‘one of the main pillars of the New Order, a mechanism
for allocating patronage and recruiting support’ (Robison and Hadiz 2004, 49). But despite
overwhelming coercive capacity and patronage resources, Golkar never managed to per-
suade the majority in Java to vote for it (Cribb 2000, Fig. 5.40).

In late 1997, in the midst of economic crisis, growing student protests began demanding
democracy. These led by May 1998 to the collapse of the New Order. The demonstrators
wanted free elections, the army out of politics, no more corruption and violence, and lowered
prices. In the first free election, held in 1999, protest votes swung radically against Golkar, but only in Java, Bali, and parts of Sumatra. Even there, however, the student movement proved unable to routinize itself. No new socialist party emerged to fill the gap on the left, unlike what happened in Spain after Franco. One of the hardest conditions the military placed on their agreement to a democratic transition was that they would not tolerate a ‘communist’ revival. The ban on the communist party remained in place (and there were no prosecutions for past human rights crimes). Democratic reforms were implemented but, according to one observer (King 2003), they were ‘half-hearted’.

In the outer islands, meanwhile, Golkar continued to poll well even after 1998. One study suggested the reason was that voting there was more personalized. The ‘locally important person’ – read patron – more readily called in his or her patrimonial debts. Golkar analyst Dirk Tomsa (2005) wrote:

To best understand the … reason for Golkar’s ongoing strength, one has to leave the shiny lights of Jakarta and venture out to the vast rural areas of eastern Indonesia, where Golkar support is especially strong. Here, politics is still primarily shaped by local gentry and influential noblemen.

By the end of 1998, another sound was heard that was to have a much bigger impact than the heartlands demand for democracy. The regions beyond Java began demanding ‘autonomy’. It started in places with long-standing separatist movements – East Timor, Aceh, Papua – but soon spread to regions that wanted to redefine citizenship within Indonesia. These ‘movements’ were led by members of local governments. They deployed a language of local citizenship, often tinged by ethnic chauvinism. Rather than focusing on improving citizen rights, their agenda majored on increasing local control over central government subsidies. Their social origins lay in the state-dependent lower middle class in hundreds of small and medium provincial towns in the outer. Their prosperity depended on state patronage, and their politics ran through the bureaucracy (van Klinken and Berenschot 2014).

Jakarta quickly agreed with a far-reaching program of decentralization, provided it went to the level of the hundreds of districts rather than that of the province that had in the past nurtured separatist movements. Neoliberal multilateral agencies, misinterpreting the dynamics at work, supported the move on the grounds that it would weaken an overbearing government apparatus and allow local civil society to flourish. Indonesia is now seen as one of the most decentralized countries in the world. Most political energy in the country is spent at the district level, where government heads and representative assemblies are directly elected.

Advocates of decentralization depicted it as of a piece with democracy. The sense that New Order authoritarianism had been due to its centralistic character was indeed widespread. It echoed worldwide sentiment that was making decentralization a ‘global trend’ (Warner 2006). But the ‘democratic deficit’ Indonesia faces today is located in precisely those local arenas that have been strengthened by decentralization. Democracy is procedurally correct, but fails to shake social inequalities, a survey by the Demos institute concluded (Priyono et al. 2007). Local elites, who derive their power mainly from the state, continue to relate to their constituency in clientelistic ways. Local political practices are marked by rent-seeking and the potential for violence. And the local constituency identifies itself mainly in localist, often communal terms.

Post-1998 decentralization shares some characteristics with colonial indirect rule. National elites justified both on the basis that the legitimacy of the locally rooted, communitarian (hierarchical) political community is more robust than that generated by modern,
national legality. Behind the public justification in both cases lay an elite preference for striking numerous personal deals with loyal provincial elites over having to cope with a cohesive, nationally aggregated political party representing popular interests. And in both cases those elite beliefs more or less consciously ran counter to a conception of democratic rule from a national centre. These convictions helped create the ‘mediated’ citizenship regime we observe in Indonesia today, and that is described elsewhere in this edition of Citizenship Studies.

A sense of the social context for such outer island clientelism today can be read in recent studies of local politics in Kalimantan. Their conclusions reflect warnings from broader studies on weakly institutionalized (semi) authoritarian countries that decentralization can exacerbate elite capture and further erode democracy (Prud’homme 1995). Amidst extensive ethnic violence and thuggish land grabs, politics in Kalimantan have experienced significant reclientelization. As the depoliticized and technocratic politics of the New Order began to lose their grip beginning in the mid-1990s, Kalimantan’s timber boom, brown coal mines, alluvial gold mines, and palm oil plantations increasingly fed a predatory form of local politics. All these activities were highly ‘lootable’ and shot through with illegality. A huge variety of ethnic organizations claiming to represent the marginalized indigenous community engaged in a form of ‘ethnic outbidding’ in order to intimidate their way into local patronage networks (Wilson 2013; see also Bakker [2015], van Klinken [2006a]). The mechanism underlying these politics is similar to that which the anthropologist Reno (1995) identified in Sierra Leone as the Shadow State. Local ruling elites aim to establish control in all areas of social life, without making a real distinction between the state and the market. In the absence of the rule of law, enforcement takes place by means of communitarian norms and threats of violence. For ordinary Dayaks this has meant remaining dependent on ethnic bosses who provide them with access to bureaucratic jobs and (more or less legal) income from logging and palm oil, in exchange for electoral loyalty.

Ward Berenschot and Peter Mulder (forthcoming) used a combined expert survey and subnational economic data to demonstrate that rent-seeking behaviour by local elites correlates positively with the extent to which the local economy is dependent on state subsidies. Citizens in such areas have much less leverage over their leaders than in areas of the country with more diversified economy. In the absence of independent law courts, an independent media, and economic alternatives, they have strong incentives to fit in with the prevailing clientelism. This conclusion matches those reached elsewhere by Gervasoni (2010) and by Chubb (1982), as noted above.

Communal politics often produce conflict between rival clientelist networks. Indonesia’s post-1998 democratization triggered sustained communal conflict in several outer islands, but not in the most populous island of Java. Ethnic bosses competing for political office in those regions were responsible for the mobilizations. Even where no violent conflict occurred, discussions about which communal group should have the right to fill top district offices revolved around the word ‘proportional representation’. Ethnic and religious political groupings continue to dominate the electoral calculus of those areas more than they do in Java. Widespread vote-buying cements the communally driven electoral campaigns more in those regions than elsewhere (Berenschot and Mulder forthcoming).

In short, central state authorities have made less effort to exert their will over economically uninteresting outer island regions, leaving citizens there to engage mainly with local authorities. Those engagements are more marked by clientelism than in the heartlands. At
times, the central state appears to have seen this model of citizenship as preferable to one that engages directly with the central state through political party representation.

Conclusion

Citizenship practices vary around Indonesia today. In some places, citizens hold their local rulers to account and successfully protest against political corruption. In others, they tend to behave more like dependents on elites who are also well-tied in to local trust communities. Communitarian local politics there reduce the rights of ‘non-native’ residents, and sometimes erupt into communal violence. This variance is not due to unevenness in the formal national rules for citizen participation, which are the same everywhere in today’s democratic Indonesia. It arises from a history of informal local practices of rule – both top-down and bottom-up – that shows regional variation. The ‘micropolitics of the localities’ have shaped different citizenship regimes – in the heartlands of Java and parts of Sumatra on the one hand, and in the ‘outer islands’ (or more accurately, eastern Indonesia) on the other.

The central state chose to build strong institutions in the most densely populated areas. Agrarian, and later commercial and industrial forms of capitalism developed most rapidly there. Social mobilization caused by these changes helped constitute citizens who formed associations to demand rights within the new institutions. Some belonged to an indigenous quasi-proletariat, others to an indigenous educated middle class. Political parties and a politicized bureaucracy interested them greatly. Their political movements eventually produced, via a revolution, the Republic of Indonesia. Where the central state had fewer interests, by contrast, its institutions remained underdeveloped. The economy in the outer islands long drew on little more than subsistence agriculture and petty trade. The central state left many governance matters to the informal practices adopted by leaders of local ‘trust communities’. This led to a pattern of communal identity politics in those regions that remains visible today. Control over the informal economy lay behind these politics – including the black economy of illegal timber-felling and of corrupt government discretionary disbursements.

The citizenship history recounted here is partly evolutionary – connected to urbanization and industrialization – and partly intentional. From the 1930s until the immediate post-independence years, politics from below were predominantly republican. After independence, they portrayed the central state as potentially emancipatory not only from colonial oppression but also from ‘traditional’ local inequalities. National elites rode to power on this republican activism and promoted it all over the country. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, however, this emancipative impulse became increasingly confined to the left and its lower class supporters who suffered under local, personalized forms of clientelism. In two convulsive moments, conservative central state authorities acted to deflect national-level citizen mobilization towards locally embedded political arenas. During the 1965 counter-revolution they did so only momentarily, before ordering a complete shutdown of popular politics. In 1999 they acted more confidently.

The contrasting citizenship trajectories in different regions of Indonesia are attributable to the specific ways in which the local colonial state and local societies shaped each other over time. Citizens relate differently to the state in large cities such as Jakarta and Medan on the one hand, and in backwaterish places like Pontianak in Kalimantan or Kupang in Timor on the other. In the first, a modern central state invested major resources in bringing about socio-economic change. Becoming the ‘handmaiden of capitalism’ there, it set
in train disruptive processes that loosened clientelistic, communal bonds and opened up possibilities for relatively autonomous citizenship practices. In the second, the central state always had fewer interests, and tended to leave much of the governance in the hands of locally hegemonic elites. Due to the weakness of the rule of law, the latter derived authority from their powers of distributing state jobs and licences to loyal followings. An informal politics of patronage are sustained by hierarchical societal norms. Recent decentralization moves, far from empowering citizens to resist such politics, have actually strengthened them in those regions as the central state abandons what little ambition it may have had there.

Notes

1. Space does not permit a full bibliography. A good general history of Indonesia is in Ricklefs (2008).
2. My argument thus differs from that of Anderson (1983), who also saw continuities between colonial and New Order state forms, by its greater emphasis on locally legitimate (though illiberal) forms of indirect rule than on repression.

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