

Installation Ceremony of *Undang Johol*, Negeri Sembilan

—With particular reference to the
traditional basis of authority—

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Negeri Sembilan is the name of the aggregation of small states (“*negeri*”) situated in the southwestern part of the Malay Peninsula. Since the 18th century, she has been ruled over by a king locally called *Yang Di-pertuan Besar*, whose authority and power should be legitimized by the four principal local chiefs (*Undang Yang Empat*). In other words, these four chiefs have the right to elect a proper king from among the male members of the royal patrilineage.

In this paper, our focal point will be placed on the chief of Johol (*Undang Luak Johol*), one of the constituents of the *Undang Yang Empat*, with a view to analyzing his basis of authority especially in terms of social structure and ritual legitimation.

In Introduction, a brief sketch will be given as to the close relationship between Johol and the royalty historically as well as mythologically.

In Chapter 2, the next points will be clarified.

- 1) The chiefship of Johol is restricted to the privileged matrilineal clan (*suku*), i. e., the *Biduanda Warith (Waris)*.
- 2) The present social organization is locally explained as consisting of ‘twelve clans’ (*suku duabelas*). This social organization should be regarded as a recent product.

- 3) The occurrence of the 'twelve clans' was probably due to a certain politically motivated divergence of the *Biduanda Warith*. Namely, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a new segment (*perut Gemencheh*) was attached to the already established *Biduanda Warith* (later *perut Johol*), when there occurred a revolutionary change in the succession rule of Johol chiefship, that is, the introduction of the rotation rule (*giliran*) between the *perut Johol* and the *perut Gemencheh*. This accretion of a new element to the *Warith* would explain why parts of the traditional *Warith* were excluded.
- 4) The 'twelve clans' can be classified into the dominant *Biduanda* group and the minority group of *Minangkabau* clans; the chief of Johol, of course, belonging to the former. In this sense, the legitimacy of the traditional chiefship seems to be based on its anti-Minangkabau or less Minangkabau and more autochthonous elements (represented by the *Batin*: the aboriginal chief).

Chapter 3 deals with the diachronic analysis of the installation ceremonies (*istiadat kerjan*) of the three latest chiefs successively; namely, Dato' Kamat (1918), Dato' Hj. Abdul Manap (c. 1953/54) and Dato' Hj. Abdul Majid (1975). Here, the topics will be as follows:

- 1) The installation ceremony is considered as always subject to invention or radical change according to the times.
- 2) Above all, we cannot miss the alternating phenomenon of principal ritual priests who function as what may be called 'chief-maker' at each ceremony. To be more concrete, at Dato' Kamat's installation, the *Pawang* (Muslim State Magician) played a central role in contrast with the *Batin* (Non-Muslim aboriginal chief), while at Dato' Abdul Manap's, the latter took place of the former. Then, at Dato' Abdul Majid's (=the present chief), the *Pawang* again turned up as a representative 'chief-maker'. This alternating phenomenon of ritual priests could be interpreted as corresponding to the rotation between the two branches of the *Warith*; i. e., the *perut*

Johol and the *perut Gemencheh*.

- 3) Moreover, it is noteworthy here that the less traditional *perut (p. Gemencheh)* depends on the more traditional and more autochthonous authority (i. e. the *Batin*) for the legitimation of the chiefship.

In the concluding chapter, our attention will be shifted on to the present chief's perception of the past and his semantic world, which proves his ambivalent cultural status with his orientation to the Minangkabau-Islam-Kingship complex. Lastly, it is to be pointed out, through the above-discussed ceremony, that the magnifying trend of ceremony sometimes shows *negative*, rather than *positive*, correlation with the actual effectiveness of the power concerned.