

Being migrant or nomadic or refugee in the Nusantara

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Abstract

Purpose – Local cultures under the nation-states have evolved and produced new concepts. Migrations and cultural interactions have also influenced the language. Thus, different conceptualisations of migration have developed in the “Malay World.” Language is not only a product of ecological and geographical environment, but it is also a result of human mobilisations and cultural intercourses. The differences caused by various Malay World conceptualisations are also related to different interactions, histories and social realities. In the “Malay World,” Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia are threatened by English hegemony. At this juncture, demonstrating these interrelationships helps one to understand local cultural intercourses between culture and social reality.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper implements the critical discourse analysis, notably, the dialectical–relational approach to different conceptualisations in the “Malay World.” Thus, it aims to discuss the reasons behind the usage of migration-related terms in Indonesia and Malaysia. How migration terms mainly shape social forms, process and circulate in the social world is argued in this paper. The authors target to investigate the local meaning sets for migration concepts and explore self-reflectivity in and critique of the usage of established images between Bahasa Indonesia and Malay concepts, using a Critical Discourse Analysis framework. The discussion section attempts to analyse and explain dialectical relations between social norms and social elements.

Findings – Trade diasporas, culture and identities of immigrants, cultural richness and multi-ethnicity have continuously diversified the conceptualisations. These concepts also indicate cultural dominations and exclusions. Thus, the migration dynamics in Southeast Asia might be understood by scrutinising these boundaries and patterns. This study showed that migration conceptualisations in the Malay world are substantially locally determined. Local wisdom and cultural codifications prevail in the migration context. A deeper understanding of the local context is essential in evaluating the international refugee protection mechanisms in these countries as neither Indonesia nor Malaysia are parties to the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Research limitations/implications – Definitions of various types of migration are referred to in multiple terminologies throughout the Nusantara. While in Bahasa Melayu, migrant refers to *pendatang*, nomadic refers to *nomad*; refugee refers to *pelarian*, to migrate refers to *berhijrah*; in Bahasa Indonesia, migrant refers to *migran*, nomadic or nomad refers *pengembara*, refugee refers to *pengungsi* and migrate, or migration refers *migrasi*. At the same time, in the Nusantara, many communities define themselves according to their geographical features, such as *Orang Sungai*, *Orang Laut* or *Orang Kuala*. In this context, defining leads to a significant impact on shaping the discourses and approaches.

Practical implications – Definitions determine the borders, flexibilities, plausibility and flows of terms. Critical Discourse Analysis especially placed emphasis on languages and their impacts on social reality. According to Critical Discourse Analysis, terms and their genealogies, transformations and limits are vital in order to comprehend social facts and truth. To understand the change and continuity of migration flow in Southeast Asia, scrutinising the migration-related terms is crucial. This study aims to examine those main terms, their connection with other words, and their transformation in the Malay world sociologically. This as such will shed more light on the social changes regarding genealogical relationships and their usage in daily life within the Critical Discourse Analysis.

Originality/value – This study aims to fulfil the gap between authentic concepts of migration literature in Nusantara. Although Bahasa Melayu and Bahasa Indonesia have a strong connection and interaction,

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migration definitions in these languages are separated from each other. Cultural and social elements greatly influence migration-connected terms in Bahasa Melayu and Bahasa Indonesia. Without this understanding and the absence of local context, any assessment of their refugee protection systems may be incomplete. This study deals with different cultural nuances and refinements and their migration conceptualisations and histories are based on the ground of their social realities.

Keywords Migrant, Refugee, Nomadic, Nusantara, Conceptualisations of migration

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Throughout history, the term Southeast Asia is defined and evolved in several ways in different studies. In the historical studies on Southeast Asia, the emphasis was frequently made on two neighbouring countries while describing the region. Many British, French and Indian scholars have used definitions such as “Farther India,” “Greater India,” “L’Inde Exterieur,” “Hinduized States” or “Indianized States” to describe the region (SarDasai, 1997, p. 3). On the other hand, Chinese scholars used the definition of “Kun Lun” or “Nan Yang” means “Little China” when describing the region. “Indochina” used by the French for the region between India and China is one of the other expressions frequently used. Conversely, geographers defined the region as “Indo-Pacific” (Cressey, 1963, p. 258). These naming are not only related to a geographical location but also to the fact that India and China are the region’s most significant cultural, social, economic and religious formative powers. These two great civilisations have tremendously framed the everyday practices, cultural activities, familial ties, societal and individual perceptions, political culture, democracy and human rights transformations in the region (Mulder, 2000). After the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention, the labour inflow from China and India to Southeast Asia to supply labour demand resulted in social, economic and political outputs (Kaur, 2004, p. 13).

These inflows from different countries to the region can be tracked from the historical perspective and transformation of the migration terminology. One of the outputs can be detected from the historical migration terminologies used in this area. Chinese and Indian labourers that migrated into this region used various local language terminologies to indicate migration dynamics. For example, among the Chinese workforce, “cai” (local recruiting agents) comprised essential elements in the labour flow as a labour contractor in the region. Plantation owners paid wages through the “cai,” which led to more exploitation and abuse of labourers by “cai” (Murray, 1980).

Similarly, Indian labourers in rubber plantations in Malaya were under the kangani (overseer) recruitment system. “Kangani” became an intermediary and supervisor in the recruitment process (Sandhu, 1969, p. 101). Moreover, we can track this migration terminology in other migration conceptualisation in Malaya. For instance, *chettiar* refers to an Indian moneylending caste and bankers; *coolie* refers to a South Asian hired labourer; *San He Hui* or triad refers to a Chinese transnational criminal secret gang; *Kapitan Cina* refers to a Chinese community leader; *kepala* refers to subcontractor and headman; *tekong* or *taikong* refers Chinese labour broker; *kongsi* refers to Chinese partnerships or company (Kaur, 2004). During this colonial period, labour terminologies played a significant role to enable one to comprehend migration networks, the roles of intermediaries, social intercourses and everyday practices. Apart from these interactions, Sri Lankan Buddhist monks, Chinese pilgrims, Muslim traders and Western colonisers have also seriously affected the region.

The archipelago region known as the Malay Archipelago includes Indonesia, the Philippines, East Malaysia, Brunei and East Timor, while the mainland states are West Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. The “Malay” or “Melayu” term helps one to draw social interaction boundaries. Anthony Milner offers insight into “Malayness” rather than the “Malays,” and he opposed broad generalisations on the definition of “Malays” (Milner, 2008, pp. 1-18). He says the “Malay” category brings together many peoples and histories. He referred

to Geoffrey Benjamin's statement that "majority of Malays see themselves or their ancestors as having once been something else" (Benjamin, 2002). "Malay" term contains the core culture of Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei, and it is used to define minority ethnicities in Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, South Africa and Sri Lanka (Reid, 2010, p. 81). The term "Melayu" dated back to Ptolemy (CE) in the 2nd century. The Srivijaya Kingdom and Jambi in Sumatra were the first centres of the "Melayu" people (Andaya, 2001, pp. 315-330). Before the 16th century, the most common term for foreigners to describe the Archipelago was Java or Yava (Reid, 2010, p. 82). With the Melaka Sultanate after 1511, the term "Melayu" began to refer to people who were Muslim and settled minority population who speaks Malay and identify themselves with loyalty to their Sultan in Melaka (Reid, 2001).

The term Malay covered coastal Javanese at the beginning of the 15th century. Over time, by gaining the power to establish relations with other states, Javanese Kingdoms became "Java" as the name for the island and for leading its language and society (Reid, 2010, p. 86). Moreover, the Javanese tradition is not canonical and elementary. Javanese conceptions were combined with Brahminic, Buddhist and Islamic components (Anderson, 2007, p. 4). In the Javanese perception, power does not require legitimacy, it is concrete and homogenous, and the quantum of power in the universe is constant (Anderson, 2007). This boundless and ambiguous power perception conquered other ethnics and became dominant. Primarily, strong statesmen utilised Javanese and Javanese traditions to consolidate their political powers (Sutarto, 2006).

Trade profoundly shaped this region because of the geographical features since the imperial ages. European colonisers headed towards Southeast Asia and trade routes. Portuguese arrived in the area after the 16th century and defined Malayos as Archipelago-based maritime traders (Reid, 2010, p. 83). The Indian Ocean trade was monopolised by Muslim traders, paving the way to become the centre of attraction for Westerners. But Muslim traders and ethnic groups were not a monolithic group. Portuguese labelled them Malayos, Java, Jawi and Luzon (Reid, 2010, p. 84). Moreover, with Chinese traders, other maritime traders such as Persians, Hadhrami, Arabs, Jains, Hindus, Jews (Curtin, 1984, p. 137) gained great hybridity to the region. Trade diasporas profoundly influenced the area. Maritime people in South Sulawesi came to the fore in the literature. After the 16th century, their importance rose in the region. Makassar, Bugis and Bajau people have separate languages and cultures (Curtin, 1984, p. 159). One of the earliest resources by Tome Pires (Pires, 1944) depicted them; Makassar people had more than fifty kings, they traded with Malacca, Java, Borneo and Siam, and their language was on their own, and they were great warriors. They were mainly corsairs. The Javanese called them Bugis (Bujuus) [1], and the Malays called them Celates (Pires, 1944, p. 226). As sea nomads, Bajau people have lived with Makassar and Bugis communities, and significant acculturational shifts happened between people groups. Since the end of the 18th century, cross-cultural trade was institutionalised via colonial companies in the region and cultural change was accelerated with trade diasporas in local communities (Curtin, 1984, p. 176). Conceptualisations and perceptions are codified substantially by local cultural heritages.

The divergent factors of trade and political demographics influenced the spread and evolution of various Bahasa Malaysia dialects (Chuchu, 2009). Migrations and local cultural interactions have also influenced language. Thus, different conceptualisations of migration have developed in the Nusantara. Language is not only a product of ecological and geographical environment, but it is also a result of human mobilisations and cultural intercourses. The differences caused by various "Malay World" conceptualisations are also related to different interactions, histories and social realities. Demonstrating these interrelationships helps one to understand local cultural intercourses between culture and social reality.

This paper implements the critical discourse analysis, notably, the dialectical-relational approach to different conceptualisations in the "Malay World." Thus, it aims to discuss how

migration terms mainly shape social forms, process and circulate in the Nusantara. We aim to investigate the local meaning sets for migration concepts and explore self-reflectivity in and critique of the usage of established images between Bahasa Indonesia and Malay concepts, using a Critical Discourse Analysis framework. This study addresses a gap in migration literature within the Nusantara region by bridging the disconnect between migration concepts in Bahasa Melayu and Bahasa Indonesia. Despite the close relationship between these languages, their migration definitions have developed separately. Cultural and social factors play a significant role in shaping migration-related terminology in both languages.

2. Research methodology

Discourse analysis is applied in meaning-making as an element of the social costs, the language affiliated with a specific social field and a different interpretation method of the world closely linked to a particular social perspective. Critical Discourse Analysis with a dialectical-relational approach tries to understand relations between semiotic and other social aspects. Thus, this analysis provides insights “how semiosis figures in the establishment, reproduction and change of unequal power relations (domination, marginalisation, exclusion) and ideological processes” and how in more general terms, it bears upon human meaning set (Fairclough, 2012, p. 163). The social process can be understood as the interaction among social structures, practices and events (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Critical Discourse Analysis is concentrated on the relationship between structural social practices and events, strategies and actions. Those three aspects of social rules can be analysed: concrete exercise, representation of the social world and constitution of identities (Fairclough, 2012, p. 164).

Fairclough argues that the dialectical-relational approach is well-suited in analysing how language and social structures interact and shape each other (Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough underlines the analysis of internal relations variety, semantic, grammatical, lexical and phonological relations (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 36-37). According to this approach, discourse is a tool for conveying meaning and a site of struggle where various social actors negotiate and contest their interests, beliefs, and identities. By analysing discourses concerning these more significant social and historical contexts, the dialectical-relational approach seeks to reveal how language is used to legitimise or challenge existing power relations and construct and reproduce social identities and meanings. It recognises that language and social structures are not fixed or static but are constantly evolving and changing in response to social and historical conditions. To be more specific, examples of these social processes are “social relations, power, institutions, beliefs and cultural values” (Fairclough, 2012, pp. 9-12).

Our intention is to uncover the social processes in different migration conceptualisations in Malaysia and Indonesia. As highlighted by Foucault (1976), order can simultaneously exist within the inner rule of things and the framework of a language. The archaeology of knowledge examines the order and classification of knowledge (taxonomy), how these rationalities are formed and how they become visible. Foucault emphasised the importance of the encyclopaedia project and the arrangement of knowledge in an encyclopaedic order, which considers both the timeless and flawless universal circular structure, as well as the transient, diverse, and fragmented forms (Foucault, 2005, p. 42). He apprehended that knowledge and language were intricately intertwined (Foucault, 2005, p. 95). Language represents its internal order, kinship with other languages, typologies of order and means of inflections (Foucault, 2005, pp. 98-99). Language is the analysis of thought in this concrete sense. As per Foucault’s perspective, the Dictionary is created to control meanings and derivations on the basis identification of words, such as the Encyclopaedia project (Foucault, 2005, p. 222).

This study aimed to discuss the interconnected social settings and categorisations, unravelling the reasons behind the emergence and divergence of migration-related concepts in Bahasa Malaysia and Indonesia. Kenneth Pike’s distinction between emic (internal) and

etic (external) concepts is still significant in the discourse about concepts (Pike, 1967). The emic set of concepts highlights the viewpoints of those within the culture and language as concentrating on key foundations. This approach facilitates comprehension of how a language or culture is structured not as disconnected elements but as a coherent and functional entity (Pike, 1967, pp. 39-41). The emic concepts such as corpus or dictionaries see language as a social phenomenon. National dictionaries and corpora reflect their community's value system, power and control, ideology and thinking order (Hoey, 2013). Dictionaries play an essential role in defining and determining the word in their etymology, form, syntactic, origin and social transformation. Defining is the crucial rule in society for self-consciousness (Szasz, 1974). Therefore, the critical discourse analysis of migration-related concepts in the national dictionaries of Bahasa Malaysia and Indonesia may show cultural, social and ideological proximities and differences in the Nusantara. Ismail Hussein, a notable advocate for the advancement of the "Malay World" through conferences and networks, asserted that the Malay language serves as a pivotal unifying factor (Hussein, 1990, p. 57). In our investigation of Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia dictionaries, we endeavoured to elucidate the nuances of how migration is conceptualised within the context of the "Malay World."

3. Discussion

In this part, we address the contextual and textual analysis of migration-related terms in Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia, and how power relations and ideologies are reinforced and challenged within the discourse. Thus, we aim to discuss which discursive strategies and tactics are used in Nusantara.

3.1 Contextual analysis

According to Merriam Webster's dictionary, "migrate" is "to move from one country, place, or locality to another" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2021). While "migrant" is "a person who moves regularly to find work, especially in harvesting crops," "nomadic" is "of, relating to, or characteristic of nomads," and "refugee" is "a person who flees to a foreign country or power to escape danger or persecution" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2021). Oxford Learner Dictionary (2021) describes "migrate" as "to move from one town, country, etc. to go and live and work in another"; "migrant" is defined as "a person who moves from one place to another to find work or better living conditions"; "nomadic" is "belonging to a community that moves with its animals from place to place"; and "refugee" is "a person who has been forced to leave their country or home because there is a war or for political, religious or social reasons" (Oxford Learner Dictionary, 2021). Etymologically, "migrate" is derived from the Latin words "migrates" and "migrare," which means "to move from one place to another" and it might come from "migwros" or "meigw-" which is an extended form of "mei-" means "to change, go, move" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2021). "Mei-" is rooted in Proto-Indo-European meaning and refers to the exchange of goods and services within a society as regulated by custom or law.

After Second World War, Europe and America emerged as significant migration destinations. From 1945 to the 1970s, Europe magnetised many migrant workers from the Middle East and Mediterranean regions (Castles & De Haas & Miller, 2014, p. 103). Over time, the Western migration system became the dominant migration perspective worldwide. According to this mentality, migrants are seen as development pioneers (Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014, pp. 79-80). Modernisation theories approached the development as instilling a project of Western values and norms to the non-Western world. Neoliberal ideologies perceived those migrants as essential elements of development for cheap labour. The main priority was always economic benefits and a needs-based approach.

On the other hand, migration in Southeast Asia has a long history and quite common (Husin Ali, 2018). Southeast Asia people often experience human mobilisations in the region. Circular migration is quite customary among Malays (Hadi, 1981). These continuous migration flows provided significant cultural interactions. The major trade ports, such as Melaka Straits, have become a cross-cultural exchange for centuries in Southeast Asia (Hussin, 2008). The region's diverse historical heritage and cultural intercourses caused different conceptualisations in migration-related terms.

3.2 Textual analysis

According to the Malay Literary Reference Center (Pusat Rujukan Persuratan Melayu), "pendatang" (migrant) means "people who come," "foreigners who come to, or enter another country" (orang mendatang, orang asing yang datang ke, atau memasuki sesebuah negeri lain) (Dewan Bahasa Pustaka, 2021). "Nomad" means groups of people who travel from one location to another to find grazing land and nourishment (suku kaum yang berpindah-pindah dari satu tempat ke tempat lain untuk mencari padang ternak, makanan), and the second meaning of "nomad" is individuals who enjoy relocating or travelling to different locations (orang yang suka berpindah dari satu tempat ke tempat lain) (Dewan Bahasa Pustaka, 2021). "Pelarian" (refugee) means "escaping, fleeing, running fast" (perihal berlari dengan cepat), and the second meaning of "pelarian" is "a person who runs away, a refugee" (orang yang melarikan diri, pengungsi) (Dewan Bahasa Pustaka, 2021). "Berhijrah" (migrate) refers to "the act of relocating or departing from one location to another: the young people in the village must move away and go to the city to find a better livelihood" (berpindah, meninggalkan sesuatu tempat untuk pergi ke tempat lain: pemuda-pemuda di kampung terpaksa ke bandar untuk mencari rezeki yang lebih baik) (Dewan Bahasa Pustaka, 2021). In general, when we examine migration terminology in Bahasa Melayu, it is clear that there isn't much difference with the meaning given in Oxford or Merriam Webster's Dictionary. However, "berhijrah" had been intentionally chosen due to the Arabic "hijr-" root. It shows the effect of Islamisation of concepts in Bahasa Melayu (Al-Attas, 1969). Al-Attas highlights the transformation of the Malay language in the Malay Archipelago through the influence of Islam. He specifically focuses on the process of Arabisation, exemplified through shifts in the names of weekdays, naming preferences among Muslim Malays, the growing prevalence of Arabic usage in Malay society, and the integration of Arab communities within Malay society (Kamaruzaman *et al.*, 2016, p. 6). These Arabisation and Islamisation also affected the concepts. The Arabic-based "berhijrah" term normalises in the social world as its Islamic connotation.

Furthermore, the Malay Literary Reference Center's definition of forcing young men to migrate also might be interpreted as a social reality in Malays. When we look at the Malay Annals, which was originally titled *Sulalatus Salatin*, the authoritative rendition of historical literature encompassing Malay myths and history, it reveals an absence of migration-associated concepts such as "pendatang, nomad, pengungsi, and berhijrah." The term "pelarian" surfaces just once within the text, denoting a particular location rather than indicating refugees (Ahmad, 2008, p. 33). Following the 19th century, the interaction of colonial powers with the area brought about significant changes in societal, cultural and intellectual aspects. British colonisers created numerous dictionaries and historical works concerning this region. However, the works of Nicholas Dennys in 1894 titled "A Descriptive Dictionary of British Malaya," John Crawfurd's "A Grammar and Dictionary of the Malay Language with A Preliminary Dissertation" from 1852, and Hugh Clifford and Frank Athelstane Sweetenham's "A Dictionary of the Malay Language" from 1894, lack the inclusion of concepts such as "pendatang," "pelarian," "nomad," "pengungsi" and "berhijrah." Notably, the terms "migrate" and "migration," denoting the act of moving to another location ("pindah" and "pindahan") are referred to in Crawfurd's work (1852, p. 114).

In the Great Indonesia Dictionary (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*), “migran” (migrant) means people or animals who migrate (orang atau hewan yang melakukan migrasi) (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, 2021*). “Migrasi” (migrate) means movement of people from one place (country and so on) to another place (country and so on) to settle (perpindahan penduduk dari satu tempat [negara dan sebagainya] ke tempat [negara dan sebagainya] lain untuk menetap) (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, 2021*). “Pengembara” (nomadic) means moving or travelling person (orang yang mengembara) (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, 2021*). “Pengungsi” (refugee) means displaced or fled person (orang yang mengungsi) (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, 2021*). Bahasa Indonesia uses Latin-rooted terms for “migrant” (migran) and “migrate” (migrasi). Bahasa Indonesia does not only take words from English, Bahasa Melayu or Arabic but also from local languages such as Javanese, Minangkabau, Sundanese and Madurese (Liputan6, 2018). Moreover, Bahasa Indonesia usually uses euphemisms for polite usage. “Pelarian” has a negative meaning as a fugitive or runaway, so it used “pengungsi” in Bahasa Indonesia. The difference between the words “pelarian” and “pengungsi” is actually very strong. “Pelarian” means the perpetrator’s active choice, while “pengungsi” refers to use of force. From a cultural point of view, this choice shows a nuance. The largest Bahasa Indonesia speakers are Javanese people who are not used to migrate and move to other places as the central position of Java. Javanese people view displacement of their own volition like escaping as a negative concept. Migration can only happen when the situation requires urgent attention such as for the sake of life security or civil conflict. Therefore “pengungsi” is a nuanced term.

3.3 Power relations and ideologies

Migration-related concepts are also inclusively related to Islamic concepts. “Pengembara” is directly associated with Islamic Sufi tradition as “suluk” in Java. Sufi practices of “pengembara” have a special place in Javanese culture. Mystic synthesis in Java between Sufi tradition and Hinduism is quite strong (Ricklefs, 2012, p. 9), and spiritual journeys are important in both cultures. We can trace this tradition in Java culture and in the Minangkabau tradition, as the “suluk” concept. Mainly, indigenising and syncretising Islam with Javanese culture caused mystic synthesis (Mulkhan, 2000). It’s common to travel (kembara) for *murid* (student), who will fulfil its spiritual teaching in Islamic mystic tariqas. “Suluk” also means “to enter the road, to walk on the road, to penetrate (something) into something else, to join, to transfer” in Sufism. “Suluk” is more comprehensive than the concepts of Islamic mystic tariqah and sects, which mean “way” and have similar connotations in terminology. Suluk referred to wide usage in the early Sufi classics, covering all the verbs related to religious life, but after the tariqa, which is the Muslim spiritual path toward direct knowledge of God or truth in the 12th century, it gained the meaning of “practising certain mystical manners and principles in the way of reaching the truth” (Almath, 1996). In Java, there is the practice of “suluk” or “laku suluk.” The subject of the wisdom is the aspirant to purify the soul from the dirt of the world, correct and beautify one’s morals to gain the ability to reach the Truth, and its purpose is to know oneself and his creator (Almath, 1996). It may involve “kembara,” just staying in the cave, or avoiding mundane and worldly life as an inner journey. “Pengembara” has its unique meaning set and it is an indigenous concept in Nusantara.

Another cultural nuance between Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Melayu is the cultural position of language. Bahasa Indonesia, the origin of Bahasa Melayu, particularly Riau-Johor Malay Sultanate, is a foreign language for Indonesians (Antarnews, 2019). Many Indonesians’ mother tongue, except those in urban areas, is the local language: Javanese for Javanese, Batak for Batak people (Nugroho, 1957). Language contacts are frequent in the region, and these cause cultural absorption, for local languages. Regional languages are crucial to comprehend local wisdom and concepts comprehensively. Regional languages also

gain depth and enrich Bahasa Indonesia (Liputan6, 2018). Another cultural difference can be seen in the definition of “nomadic.” In Western culture, nomadic refers to characteristics and features of nomads and wandering peoples from place to place. However, according to Bahasa Melayu, “nomad” refers directly to a tribe and wandering community, particularly “Orang Laut” (sea folk). “Orang Laut” as sea nomads are entrenched with one of the tremendous cultural histories in Southeast Asia, the coasts of Borneo. So, nomadism and migration natively have existed in the region (Sopher, 1965).

3.4 Discursive strategies and tactics

Following Indonesia’s independence, the establishment of a national language became a crucial endeavour to foster Indonesian national identity and awareness (Anderson, 1966, p. 90). During the colonial era, the Malay language was employed to enhance national cohesion and eliminate racial prejudice within the Volksraad, the colonial-era legislative institution of Indonesia (Rohmadi, Akhyar, & Wartyo, 2017). The formation of modern Indonesia was rooted in three distinct languages—Dutch, Javanese and revolutionary Malay—as well as two genuine linguistic and cultural heritages. Consequently, the Indonesian language emerged as a fusion amid these diverse linguistic and social elements, signifying a departure from established norms. This newly devised language introduced a cultural disruption within the indigenous Indonesian realm. It also represented a triumph in terms of national unity and paved the way for the restoration of Indonesian traditions and practices (Anderson, 1966).

The term “Transmigrasi” (transmigration) constitutes a pivotal concept in comprehending migration-related terminology within the Indonesian language. The concept of “Transmigrasi” aids in grasping the state’s endeavour to establish an orderly society, organising the populace in a manner that simplifies key state functions such as taxation, conscription and rebellion prevention. The Transmigration programme, initiated during the Dutch colonial period and persisting after Indonesia gained independence, serves to address population distribution disparities, and foster economic progress across various regions of the country (Tirtosudarmo, 2021). Under this program, individuals from densely populated areas, notably Java and Bali, were relocated to less developed zones like Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua (Pratiwi, Matous, & Martinus, 2022). The government furnished transmigrants with land, housing and basic infrastructure in their new locales, aiming to motivate land cultivation and contribute to regional economic growth. However, the program has sparked controversy as concerns about “Javanization” and “Islamization” by native populations, which have fuelled separatist movements and communal unrest. It has also faced criticism for its negative impact on rainforests and wildlife, as well as the Java-centric Indonesian government’s efforts to expand economic and political dominance by resettling individuals with strong ties to Java and loyalty to the state. Post-independence, the program was also employed for the re-socialisation of former guerilla fighters, prevention of attraction towards Islamic rebel groups and agricultural experimentation (Tirtosudarmo, 2021, p. 14). Indonesian governments operationalise transmigration as a form of social engineering for rural settlement and production. It serves as a biopolitical tool to manipulate and govern the population, continuing the historical trend of precolonial demographic control over land and people, albeit under different guises.

On the other hand, Arabisation and Islamisation of concepts in Bahasa Malaysia play important roles in Islamising the Malay community. Malaysia did not ratify Geneva Conventions on Refugees in 1951 and 1967 protocols, but unlike other ASEAN countries, Malaysia allowed the breaching of the border by Muslim Rohingya refugees in 2013 (Togoo & Ismail, 2021, p. 14). According to UNHCR Malaysia (2023), Malaysia has 181,500 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR, and 105,760 of them are Rohingyas. Muslim Rohingyas with UNHCR cards show the strong narrative of Muslim unity and the importance

of the global Muslim community (ummah) discourse in Malaysia. Rohingyas believe in the strong connection with the Malay community that develops when they regularly participate in prayers at the nearby mosques (Togoo & Ismail, 2021, p. 15). These Muslim solidarity discourses are also utilised by political actors and former Prime Minister Najib Razak hold a rally under the name of ummah meeting to get Malay-Muslim support, and the Rohingya refugee issues became a religious-political tool for Malaysian politics (Hutt, 2016).

3.5 Conclusion

The history of Southeast Asia demonstrates the inevitability of migration flows in the region. It acknowledges the role of trade diasporas, immigrant cultures and multi-ethnicity in shaping these concepts, which can also reflect cultural dominance and exclusions. This research emphasises that migration dynamics in Southeast Asia are deeply rooted in local wisdom and cultural codifications.

In the Bauman sense of modernity, there is a tendency to blur the distinctions between different things or people, making them appear more similar. Western paradigms dominate migration-related research, but the Global South, Third World or Developing World has their own cultural nuances and migration conceptualisations rooted in their social realities. In the context of Southeast Asia, while colonialist concepts still influence today's terminology in the region, cultural exchange through trade ports and historical legacies has also shaped the conceptualisations of migration-related terms. Arabic-based terms like "berhijrah" in Bahasa Melayu reflect the influence of Islamisation and Arabisation in the language. The term "pengembara" in Bahasa Indonesia also highlights an indigenous concept rooted in Islamic Sufi tradition, representing a distinct local discourse.

This conceptual analysis provides power relations and ideologies embedded in migration-related concepts. The concept of "Transmigrasi" in Indonesia illustrates how migration policies can serve as tools for state control, economic development and social engineering. Looking at the history of the concepts also explores the intersection of migration, politics and religion in the context of Muslim Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, demonstrating how Islamic solidarity narratives intersect with refugee politics. Migration-related terms play a crucial role in reflecting, shaping and challenging societal perceptions and structures. It shows that language evolves within the context of nation-building and how culture, religion and political agendas influence migration-related terms.

In the Nusantara region, social organisations and concepts are deeply connected to customs (adat) and local understandings. To assess the refugee protection mechanisms in these countries, it is essential to consider the local context, since neither Indonesia nor Malaysia are parties to the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Further ethnographic research examining local languages, codifications, and folklore can provide a more in-depth and sophisticated analysis in the future.

Note

1. According to Anthony Reid in his article, namely "The Rise of Makassar" (Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Reviews, 1983), the translator incorrectly labelled the "Bujuus" as Bugis; it should be Bajau.

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