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## Local Resistance in Kerinci in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Depati Parbo and the People’s Struggle Against the Power of the Dutch East Indies (A Study of Archives and Oral History)

**ABSTRACT:** Kerinci is one of the regencies in Jambi province, Sumatera island, Indonesia. This region has a number of past stories that have not been widely known, especially from outside the region. This historical story still lives in the nuances of locality that spread in a certain area. Local history tales are often underestimated, as they are considered unimportant to be discussed by people from other regions. Beyond that, local history has the potential to correct, alter or add to the familiar historical discourse. One of Kerinci’s local history themes is the story of Depati Parbo’s struggle against Dutch colonialists in the early twentieth century. The Dutch had made Kerinci as the target mastery for a long time. The White people were tempted by the many advantages gained from this effort, such as the mastery over the salt lane, the variety of valuable forest products, and the clearing of plantations. The effort was responded with the defense of Kerinci people raised by the leaders of Kerinci society, including Depati Parbo. This study uses a social history approach, which photographs social solidarity that grows due to a cause. The findings show that the emergence of heroism in the body of Kerinci society is caused by the threat that was spread by the Dutch East Indies troops, who wanted to establish influence there. The sources used are the Dutch East Indies colonial’s archives and the oral sources obtained from local sources. Based on these two sources, the attempt to reconstruct the history in the colonial era in Kerinci hopefully can be accomplished.

**KEY WORDS:** People’s Resistance; Dutch Colonization; Economics and Social Solidarity; Kerinci’s Local History.

### INTRODUCTION

By the twentieth century, the Dutch East Indies government was increasingly persistent in controlling the territories in the Indonesian archipelago or *Nusantara*. They

were involved in a number of interactions with the local rulers that led to the effort of the White People’s government to instill power within the local rule. There were diverse responses toward this agenda.

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Some of the local authorities were involved in the resistance, because of considering that the Dutch treatment was a dangerous colonization; while others felt helped, because the presence of Dutch East Indies troops could dampen the civil rivalry in the palace. Consequently, if one party should win, then, they must be willing to follow the Company or Dutch East Indies' requests (Schelander, 2000; Taylor, 2003; Vickers, 2005; and Bosma & Raben, 2008).

The government of the Dutch East Indies underwent war by war breathlessly. Throughout the nineteenth century, a number of people's resistance that narrowed the Dutch foreign exchange reserves exploded. The Java War, 1825-1830 (Carey, 2008; and Gomperts, 2008:312-314) and Aceh War, 1873-1913 (Veer, 1985; and Missbach, 2010:39-62), for example, were two of the many local wars that the Dutch East Indies government regretted. The consequence of both wars was that many losses were gained, such as the depletion of military personnel, the threat of scarcity of the state treasury, and worry of the widespread of dissatisfaction with their position (Moor, 1989; Carey, 2008; and Missbach, 2010).

In this era, the Dutch East Indies had also changed its political provisions. The Company was more active in controlling the land and instilling its political influence. Previously, the relationship with local rulers was only bilateral in nature without requiring any tenure of land. This was a model that the Dutch had maintained since the seventeenth century. When the Cornelis de Houtman's entourage came to the Indonesian archipelago (*Nusantara*), their only aim was to get spices without wanting to control the land beyond the ocean. Until when their proud merchant venture, the VOC (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) fell by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch still regarded local rulers as profitable partners (Gin ed., 2004; and Ter Keurs, 2011:165-182).

Counted since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch had got a lot of financial benefits in the Indonesian archipelago. Not only did they get spices, or commodities from other Eastern countries, but also obtained the right to use

some ports in northern Java. The government of Batavia got this opportunity, because of helping the King of Mataram to dispel the turmoil of rebellion in several areas in Central and Eastern Java (Carey, 1997; Ricklefs, 2001; and Moertono, 2009:95-123). These ports (*bandar*) were soon connected to Batavia as the center of Dutch power and other ports in the Indonesian archipelago. The colony in Batavia gradually grew in tandem with colonies in other regions, such as: *Makassar* (Atsushi, 2010:127-142; and Klaveren, 2013:47-58); *Bangka* (Madjid, 2017a:33-48 and 2017b:50-70); and *other areas* (Ricklefs, 2001; Taylor, 2003; and Vickers, 2005).

After a short period of British rule (1811-1816), the Dutch returned with a new colonization format. They began to glance at the control of land as the ideal to establish a sovereign overseas colony. The attempt to break the people's resistance was accompanied by instilling of power administratively and placement of the community leaders as a second-class group after the Europeans. From the coast, they looked and tried their luck to the inland areas, as when the Dutch had mastered Mukomuko, the coastal area of *Bencoleen* or Bengkulu (Naidu, 2016:12-57), they continued their attempt to master Kerinci in Sumatera (Gin ed., 2004; Meng, 2006; and Vlekke, 2008).

Prior to the Dutch arrival, Kerinci had been one of the sovereign territories. It had never met the political interests of Europeans. The inhabitants of Kerinci depended on forest products and the products from Lake of Kerinci. This region was a blend of unique landscapes. Kerinci residents have lived on the edge of Lake, but also not far from Mount of Kerinci, one of the highest mountains on the island of Sumatera. To reach this area, people from the coast or from outside the Kerinci region must travel a long and tiring journey through the steep hills and divide the wilderness (Meng, 2006; Giyarto, 2008; Yusri, 2016; and interview with Respondent A, 6/8/2017).

Lake of Kerinci is an important center of local economy and migration. For a long time, Kerinci people have used this waterway as a means of transportation. Fish in the lake

have been also used to meet the needs of families there. Kampung Rawang is an area known for its bamboo raft craft. This village is traversed by a river connected to Lake of Kerinci as its estuary. On the river side, there are grown bamboo plants which people in the surrounding process into a variety of crafts, including a raft (Giyarto, 2008; and Syaepudin, 2017).

The inhabitants of Kerinci are also known as diligent farmers. They use agricultural tools that are still simple, such as a small javelin used to cut wood or to dig the soil to be planted with grain. After the harvest comes, they will market their plantation products independently in the markets around Kerinci. The clearance of forest later made into plantations has been done, but not yet to meet the needs of production. Migration of residents from outside Kerinci has also happened. The migrants usually choose settlements inland, such as behind a hill. There they build a new village, which in the local slang is called *talang* (gutter), such as Kampung Talang Kemuning located behind a hill that borders Kampung Lolo located on the edge of the main connecting road (Watson, 1992; Elviandri, 2012; and interview with Respondent B, 6/8/2017).

The society of Kerinci are known as devout Muslims. They make Islam as one of the most important elements of the formation of values and culture. Islamic teachings combine with the local custom of Kerinci; therefore, they form distinctive cultural products, values, and Islamic expressions (Sunliensyar, 2016b:107-128). This is reflected when they hold a feast (*kenduri*), which is a celebration of the favors obtained by a resident of Kerinci. In the commemoration of the event, they insert Islamic nuances, such as the existence of a common prayer. This is one of the traditions that has long been performed by the people of Kerinci (Watson, 1992; Elviandri, 2012; and Interview with Respondent C, 6/8/2017).

Although living in the inland, it does not make the art insight of Kerinci people becomes shackled. Through the architecture of the old mosque in Kampung Koto Tengah and another old mosque in Sungai Penuh, we can judge that Kerinci people have an

endemic and noble artistic endeavor. The mosques are well carved using floral and foliage motifs. The sculpture is painted with a vibrant color of green, red, white, black, and brown. The old mosque's construction in Kerinci is different from that found in other areas of West Sumatera or Jambi (Watson, 1992; Elviandri, 2012; and Ernanda, 2017).

Leadership in Kerinci consists of several federation areas, namely: *Tiga Helai Kain* (Three Pieces of Cloth) in South Kerinci and *Delapan Helai Kain* (Eight Pieces of Cloth) in North Kerinci. These areas are divided into several *mendapo* (village level) and *dusun* (sub-village), each led by a *Depati*. Each *Depati* in Kerinci governs his territory independently. If there is a large-scale problem, they will hold deliberation and implement the consensus, such as when fighting against the Dutch East Indies troops (Zakaria, 1984; Watson, 1992; and Syaputra, 2015).

In an oral source, it is mentioned that the power of a *Depati* is like the words of *memenggal putus* (cutting off), *memakan habis* (consuming), and *membunuh mati* (killing). In the midst of society, *Depati* (local leader) has the authority to decide a case. In leading his territory, *Depati* is assisted by four social groups, namely: *kaum adat* (indigenous people), *ulema*, intellectuals, and youth. Although *Depati's* power is acknowledged independently, not all *Depatis* have the prosperity that relies on an agreed mutual funding, like tribute from society to its leader. There are some *Depatis* who meet the needs of their life by farming, like residents in general. *Depati Parbo*, a leader of Kampung Lolo Kecil, is one of them. During his lifetime, he was known as a farmer who sold his own garden products in the market (Watson, 1978 and 1992; Bonatz *et al.*, 2009; and interview with Respondent B, 6/8/2017).

The Kerinci society recognizes a philosophy of common prosperity that is summarized in the phrase of *parit bersudut empat* (four-pointed ditches). This term refers to the territory of a *dusun* (sub-village), whose government has internal and external sovereignty. The land or area occupied by the "four-pointed ditches" is the common property (*tanah negeri*) of the people who

inhabit the sub-village. This land is free to use by local people, but not allowed to be pawned or sold (Dasiba *et al.*, 2004:9-11). From here, it is known that the people of Kerinci adhere to a closed social system, i.e. as can as possible their descendants, children, and grandchildren do not live far apart from their parents (Watson, 1992; Sager, 2008; and Bonatz *et al.*, 2009).

The *negeri* (villages – now is called regency) of Kerinci in the nineteenth century were the federal *negeris* under the authority of the Jambi Sultanate. The location between Kerinci and Jambi was too far, in which Kerinci was at the western end and Jambi was at the eastern end of Sumatra island. Therefore, if traveling on land, it was then like splitting this island. However, it did not make obedience and compliance of Kerinci people to Sultan of Jambi faded (Watson, 1992; and Sunliensyar, 2016a).

The relationship of Kerinci and Jambi can be examined from a story of the arrival of a messenger of Jambi to Kerinci. Unfortunately, there is no year number that can be used as information about it. It is told that one day, a messenger of Jambi came to some villages in Kerinci, like Temiai, Pulau Sangkar, Pengasi, and Tanah Hiyang. The purpose of his arrival was to convey souvenirs from the Sultan of Jambi in addition to meeting with leaders in each region. The souvenirs were exquisite cloth, golden ornaments horn, and gold scissors provided by Sultan of Jambi as evidence that Kerinci and Jambi were good friends (Watson, 1992; Sager, 2008; Bonatz *et al.*, 2009; and Sunliensyar, 2016a).

The messenger also said that the Sultan of Jambi deigned to take control of *Depati* position in Kerinci that can be passed down from generation to generation. Nevertheless, Kerinci was not a Jambi subordinate in full. The *Depatis* of Kerinci were only required to pay the tribute to the King of f 130 per *dusun*, during the appointment of the new Sultan in Jambi. The tradition of paying this tribute continued until the coronation of the last King of Jambi, namely Sultan Thaha Saifuddin, 1855-1858 (Watson, 1992; Sunliensyar, 2016a; and Madjid, 2017b).

The ruler of the land of *Hiyang* (Hindu

deity), then, cut a piece of cloth given as a gift above into seven pieces, each was given to the rulers of his subordinates. It is this division of cloth that inspired the naming of the *Tiga Helai Kain* (Three Pieces of Cloth) and *Delapan Helai Kain* (Eight Pieces of Cloth), as previously described. Each of the leaders in the federation was allowed to collect taxes from the society. This tribute collection was overseen by Pangeran Puspo Ali, a descendant of the Jambi nobility (Meng, 2006; Syaputra, 2015; and Madjid, 2017b:14-15).

Kerinci society adheres to a closed marriage system. In Kerinci custom, a Kerinci tribe is required to marry a fellow Kerinci. Inter-tribal marriage is a lot happening currently, but not to interfere with the originality of custom that has been running for a long time. Unity in marriage, for Kerinci people, is interpreted not only as a form of religious ritual carried out by two families that may have originated from different village, but also partly as a form of carrying out a tradition that has been preserved from generation to generation (Watson, 1992; Situmorang, 2011; and interview with Respondent C, 6/8/2017).

The second tribe that has a large population after the people of Kerinci is the Minangkabau tribe. Minangkabau people have long lived and done their activities in Kerinci area. Until now, they still maintain the customs of their village of origin, one of them is seen from the use of Minangkabau language daily. The use of Minangkabau language in one of the crowded spots of Kerinci, as in Sungai Penuh, is no longer regarded as the language outside Kerinci, but it is part of the peculiarities of the language in Kerinci itself. It can not be separated from Kerinci location which is the neighbor of Minangkabau people's villages (*negeri*) of origin, such as Alahan Panjang and Solok (Watson, 1992; Naim *et al.*, 2002; and Drakard, 2004).

The access to Kerinci from the north passes through these two areas. Minangkabau people in Kerinci itself consider that Kerinci is not their wandering area, i.e. the area that was originally considered not the place of origin of Minangkabau people. This region is also the village of origin of

some Minangkabau people. In Kerinci, Minangkabau people are known as tenacious workers in the field of commerce and service sectors. In fact, a man who was hailed as a historian and a humanist of Kerinci, named Iskandar Zakaria, still has the Minangkabau blood on his body (Drakard, 2004; and interview with Respondent D, 5/8/2017).

## METHOD AND THEORY

This article is a follow-up output of research revealing the story of Depati Parbo's struggle from a social history point of view. There are several steps taken to arrive at a local historical study based on sociological analysis to reveal a social historical phenomenon (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Berg, 2007; Ogburn, 2007; and Sjamsuddin, 2007).

*First*, to know the whole episodes related to a theme based on someone's persona in an event or event itself. In some cases, this action is included in the pre-eliminatory research. *Second*, to explore relevant sources, from literal sources as well as oral sources. *Third*, to connect the story of a small history (micro history) with a great history (macro history). If authoritative event-sequences based on authentic source have been obtained, then analyzes by using various social science points of view can be made.

Social history is one of the most widely used approaches to photograph other themes of a historical phenomenon. Through the spectrum of sociology, it is expected that historians gain a broader perspective rather than still struggle in the classical approach of historical studies, such as the rise and fall of a civilization, advances initiated by a head of state that is generally oriented to the political field, such as power, victory of war or coup, or about the depictions surrounding the life of political intrigue within the palace. These themes do not mean unworthy or unimportant to talk, but it is like to assert that history is concerned in politics *an sich* without being allowed to turn to other wider and more complex areas (Kartodirdjo, 1982; Ogburn, 2007; and Sjamsuddin, 2007).

On this occasion, the authors use the phenomena of social solidarity contained in the form of resistance of Kerinci residents

against the entry of Dutch East Indies colonial's influence. Before the European troops set foot on the ground of Kerinci, there had been an event of the murder of Dutch's messengers from Mukomuko named Imam Mersa and Pemangku Somah (Madjid, 2017b:53-58). The death of both was an expression of the dislike of the Kerinci people in relation to all forms of ways undertaken by the Dutch East Indies government. Although the Dutch used ambassadors from Malay people, who were *actually* native, but it did not make suspicions of Kerinci people receded: not giving an opportunity, they immediately acted to restrict Dutch efforts to broaden the way for power to Kerinci (Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017).

The growth of social solidarity that has been ingrained in the minds of the people of Kerinci can be examined also from their sympathy to the war against the Dutch East Indies troops that occurred in some areas in Jambi. The Sultanate of Jambi under the leadership of Sultan Thaha Syaifuddin was fiercely keen on opposing colonial powers. They formed networking in several areas of Jambi to jointly rise up against the *Kompeni* (the Dutch military), such as in Tebo and Merangin areas. Kerinci is part of the chain of Jambi people's struggle (Wahyudi, 2017; and interview with Respondent E, 3/7/2014).

The sociologists interpret social solidarity in an ingrained terminology. In the research, the authors are interested in using the explanation of social solidarity initiated by Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist. According to Emile Durkheim (2014), in every society, it grew a social solidarity that emerged from the commonality of the profession, i.e. as a working entity (Durkheim, 2014). This phenomenon arises by itself, not necessarily preceded by events or certain events. The similarity and cohesiveness in the society by itself gave birth to integration. The similarities in deeds and minds have actually existed for a long time (Durkheim, 2014:51-52; and Subrt, 2017).

Entity of workers meant by Emile Durkheim (2014), if it is associated with the society of Kerinci, of course, is the uniform pattern of everyday life passed by a group

of human. This pattern of life can be interpreted as a homogeneous daily life in a certain sense. For example, people on the edge of Kerinci Lake, such as in Pulau Tengah and Tanjung Pauh, mostly depend on their life from the products from the Lake, such as fish catches, whether they are lured or kept in a cage. For the inhabitants of Kerinci who inhabit hilly areas in Pengasi and Lolo, their livelihoods are gardening or looking for forest products. The similarity of daily activities makes the relationship among people closer. Added to the similarity of customs, traditions, and religions, then social solidarity becomes a necessity (cf Durkheim, 2014; Subrt, 2017; and Wahyudi, 2017).

One of the obvious episodes of social solidarity is when a number of villages in Kerinci decided to oppose the presence of the Dutch power. The party who initiated this war is *the ruling class*, such as Depati Parbo, Depati Gayur, and others. The role of Depati Parbo was quite central in this war. Although he came from Kampung Lolo Kecil, which was located a little bit far from Lake Kerinci, its war activity was felt to the edge of the lake. This indicates that there had already been a unified communication among the inhabitants of Kerinci in the coast of the lake with those living behind the hill (Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017).

The visible form of solidarity is the preparation of wars raised by Kerinci residents. At some points of the battle, Kerinci fighters had made some preparations. When facing Dutch troops coming from Tanah Rawang to Pulau Tengah, the residents of Pulau Tengah had already been ready. Elsewhere, when there was news that the *Kompeni* (the Dutch military) troops came from Sungai Penuh, then on a hill not far from Kampung Pulau Tengah, Depati Gayur led a number of troops to stop the rate of the enemy (interview with Respondent F, 6/8/2017). Later in Lempur, Depati Parbo's troops built defensive trenches by digging up



**Picture 1:**

“A Path to Sungai Penuh with Backdrop of the Lake of Kerinci in 1900”  
(Source: KITLV Media Online, owned by Authors)

the ground to intercept Dutch troops coming from Ranah Menjuntio (Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017). See picture 1.

Although the chosen theme still revolves around the political issue, i.e. the intersection of the two forces of the society, as can as possible the explanations that dwell on leadership problems and seem away from the lives of smaller social entities will be avoided. For that, it needs precision to sort some information so as not to get trapped in the political paradigm, which does not touch on other themes that actually have a chance to add information treasury (Geertz, 1973; Fearon, 1999; and Subrt, 2017).

The research that has been done by the authors indicated that some of the raised phenomena do not must relate to power as the driving of war. The existence of social solidarity which involves the ruling group with the people he leads, as important actors in Kerinci war, became one of the proof that the war against colonialism in Kerinci is not merely a war between the powers, but an outburst of passion of the people who had long breathed air of freedom, but then faced a threat that has the potential to claim their freedom (Durkheim, 2014; Subrt, 2017; and Wahyudi, 2017).

In order to support the above ideas, a thorough reading of the history of the Kerinci

war should be presented. The abundant information about Kerinci war came from the Dutch East Indies government's archive stored in the National Archive Building of the Republic of Indonesia or ANRI (*Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia*) in Jakarta. Before the Dutch Indies Government, both central and regional, established a military expedition over Kerinci, the Dutch East Indies government had undertaken a correspondence to equate perceptions regarding their occupational intentions. In addition, this correspondence was also intended for the addition of personnel and logistics, so that during the expedition, troops on duty in the field could work maximally. The Dutch East Indies's archives were not created for the interests of historical writing. Today, through the Dutch-language archives, historians on this period have benefited immeasurably from the old archives to reconstruct historical events that are still sketchy (Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017).

One of the prominent features of the use of the Dutch East Indies's archives is its concentration on the *Neerlandocentric* nuances in it. Almost every description pertaining to the Company was presented as a wise move; in contrast, when informing the situation of indigenous fighters, the Dutch people regarded them as gangsters of rioters who tormented the masses. The military action carried out by the Dutch seemed to be the sole answer to cut off subversive activities and various movements of disobedience initiated by Depati Parbo and other Kerinci leaders (Kartodirdjo, 1982; Sjamsuddin, 2007; Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017).

In order to present an objective historical study, one that needs to be addressed is the change of point of view from *Neerlandocentric* to *Indonesia-centric*. Information obtained from Dutch language archives was re-read back using the glasses featuring Kerinci fighters as a party that sought to defend the sovereignty of their Home Land from the effort of the White Nation's control. The Dutch East Indies colonial party in this case is a force that displays anger through the efforts to instill mastery in Kerinci (Kartodirdjo, 1982; Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017).

War is a decision of unfinished diplomacy, and it is a unilateral decision of the Dutch people. As for Kerinci people, they are a community that takes up weapons, it can be said, because they are forced by circumstances. They did not expect to compete with the Dutch, but unexpectedly the enemy wanted that the freedom having been existed in Kerinci had to disappear and switch to submission under the Dutch's buttstock (Liempt, 2012; Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Kerinci war lasted between 1902 and 1903. Although this war occurred in a short time, it was enough to emerge widespread anxiety, even its thrill reached Batavia (Jakarta now). In 1902, Imam Mersa and Pemangku Somah were commissioned by the Dutch colonial government in Indrapura to meet several Kerinci leaders to convey the intention of the Dutch East Indies government to tie a friendship with the inhabitants of Kerinci. After arriving at Dusun Lempur, they were intercepted by a number of residents of Dusun Lempur; and when known that they carried an intention from the Dutch, the two messengers were immediately executed in place (Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017).

The news of the death of two messengers was heard by *Kontrolir* (Controller, a district officer in the Dutch colonial era) of Mukomuko and even also arrived on the table of the Resident of Bengkulu. *Resident* (head of a residency in the Dutch colonial administration) of Bengkulu departed to meet *Kontrolir* of Mukomuko to discuss the matter. The *Resident* of Bengkulu regarded this murder as an insult to the Dutch colonial government. The bravery shown by the Dusun Lempur residents had the potential to erode the influence of the Dutch colonial government in areas previously had been occupied. Patrol was conducted in a number of areas adjacent to Kerinci, such as in Sungai Ipu, Talang Petai, Lubuk Pinang, Ulak Si Laut, Sungai Tenang, and Serampas.

Depati Parbo is a figure considered responsible for killing the messengers from Indrapura. It is said that after the murder, Depati Parbo approached the crowd of

people in Dusun Lempur and then blamed their anarchist actions. But, after getting clear information, Depati Parbo actually justified this murder, especially after seeing the letter carried by the messengers whose contents declared that all leaders of Kerinci had declared submission to the government of the Dutch East Indies. This letter had been stamped by Depati Parbo. Of course, Depati Parbo was offended by these findings. This was a fake letter that if it reached the table of the Dutch people, it could be used as their tool to sue their power over Kerinci (Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017). About the Depati Parbo, see picture 2.

*Resident* (head of a residency in the Dutch colonial administration) of Bengkulu sent a letter to inform the tension that occurred in Kerinci to the Governor-General in Batavia (Jakarta now). While awaiting a reply, he coordinated with the Military Commander in Bengkulu to hold a military expedition to find the murderer of the messengers from Indrapura. A number of troops were tasked to comb the border area of Kerinci to limit the relationship of the Kerinci people with the people on the border. Then, some troops began to be placed like: one troop in Indrapura; one troop in Padang Atas, which was adjacent to North Kerinci; and one other troop was stationed at Mukomuko (Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017).

The placement of Dutch troops was not unknown by Kerinci people. Kerinci residents began to organize themselves in the army line. Kerinci fighters were not a bunch of people having profession as a regular troop, but common citizens leaving their daily business and took a role as a troop of defender of the land (*negeri*). The weapons they used were simple, only machetes, *keris* (a double edged dagger), gun, sword, and others. Although the war supplies of Kerinci people were simple, they were known to have reliable supernatural science. In this context, Ciry W. Watson (1978) mentions that some Kerinci people had *ilmu kereh* (hard science), one of which was able to transform themselves into tigers (Watson, 1978:123-143).

According to Respondent F, Arlis Harun of Dusun Lolo Kecil, the Dutch East Indies



**Picture 2:**

“Self-Portrait of Depati Parbo”

(Source: [https://www.harianhaluan.com/assets/berita/original/22660071356-soraklintera\\_com\\_42\\_uihuih.jpg](https://www.harianhaluan.com/assets/berita/original/22660071356-soraklintera_com_42_uihuih.jpg), 17/8/2017)

troops came from North Kerinci, which was from Koto Limau Sering. Their task was to reach Depati Parbo’s village in Dusun Lolo Kecil. Before they got there, they were stuck in Kampung Pulau Tengah. This village included the most heroic in maintaining Kerinci compared to other village. The Dutch troops were repeatedly repulsed and the people of Pulau Tengah struggled fiercely. Depati Gayur was in charge of leading the troops to withstand the enemy’s troop in the first line. The enemy’s attacks also came from the direction from Lake Kerinci. They got on the ditch got from Rawang residents. One of the other leaders of Pulau Tengah in charge of restraining attacks from the direction of the lake was Putri Mesurai (*cf* Madjid, 2017b; Wahyudi, 2017; and interview with Respondent F, 6/8/2017).

In Kampung Pulau Tengah, there were several locations that became hot spots of the battle between Kerinci troops with the Company. Before entering Kampung Pulau

Tengah, the enemy was stuck at the bridge which was now known as “Jembatan Merah” (Red Bridge). In this bridge, many Pulau Tengah fighters became victims. On the north side of the river was a plot of land which at the time of Kerinci war once served as a refuge for women, children, and the elderly. The bunker was burned by the *Kompeni* (the Dutch military) and the refugees were roasted in it (Madjid, 2017b; Wahyudi, 2017; and interview with Respondent F, 6/8/2017). See picture 3.

The Dutch troops also came from the South, possibly this was placed in Mukomuko. They passed the lane of Ranah Menjunto. Knowing the existence of enemy’s movement from there, the residents of Dusun Lempur were ready by digging the fortress in the hills. They had also built wire of information to determine the whereabouts of the enemy. The opponent’s troop was blocked in Dusun Lempur, so that their intention to join the troops from the North was halted (Madjid, 2017b; Wahyudi, 2017; and interview with Respondent F, 6/8/2017). Now, in the ex-trenches of the defense of the Dusun Lempur fighters was built memorials to commemorate the episodes of the battle there.

On July 14, 1903, a fierce battle took place in the courtyard of Depati Parbo in Lolo. Captain Gusdorf was entrusted with the strength of 21 bayonet troops. The war soon broke out in the Northwest of this village. Kerinci fighters provided difficult resistance. Depati Parbo participated in this war. He did not go down to the battlefield, but commanded his troops from rather far place. This time, Kerinci troop were forced to admit the enemy’s toughness. Before losing, they retreated regularly. Depati Parbo also managed to escape. The Dutch troops who won this battle decided to return (Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017).

On July 17, 1903, the *Kompeni* (Dutch) troop led by De Klerck was assigned to subdue Kampung Pulau Sangkar. Before



**Picture 3:**  
The Researchers (Johan Wahyudi and M. Dien Madjid)  
in Front of Masjid Koto Tuwo, Pulau Tengah, Kerinci  
(Source: Private Photo)

that, he had to subdue Lolo first, because the access to the Pulau Sangkar passed through Depati Parbo’s village. Prior to arriving in Lolo, this troop passed through Dusun Pondoh. Somewhere, believed to be the post of defence of Kerinci troop, the troop of the Dutch East Indies which originally walked straight immediately formed a round defensive formation. Instantly, the condition became quiet. Each eye of the personnel saw here and there. Once considered to be safe, then they continued their way. This worry showed that in almost every military operation in Kerinci, the opposing troop was haunted by the shadow of the ambush of the Kerinci people who were known proficient in the fight *hand to hand* or close range, armed with *kelewang* or sabers (Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017).

The troop of De Klerck was lucky, because they found that Dusun Lolo was empty. There was no clear information as to why this village was emptied by its citizens, but looking at the previous war, possibly the villagers had been evacuated to safer areas. This troop did not continue the journey to Pulau Sangkar, but returned to Kemah Lempur and joined a troop led by *Perwiras* (Officers) Gusdorf and Hajeniur. On the way,

they were intercepted by a number of fighters of Kerinci. Many of the troops of Kerinci used sabers (*kelewang*). This attack made the Dutch troops pressed. With some difficulty, one by one of them managed to escape. In this sudden war, the Dutch troop lost two rifles. See picture 4.

Several other battles also occurred in some villages in Kerinci, like in Pengasi, Tanjung Pauh, Sungai Penuh, and others. In general, the style of fighting of the Kerinci troop used guerrilla tactic. They maximized the use of handguns, such as *keris* (a double edged dagger) and *kelewang* (saber). Less of them used a rifle. Good knowledge of geography was used to connect information and to choose a place that deserved to be a place to hide or launch attacks. This little information was described in detail in the Dutch East Indies colonial archives (Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017).

The same war vision, the good connection of wire of information, and fanaticism to reject the presence of the colonial are actually radiance of the collective consciousness of Kerinci society, who did not want if their homeland was controlled by foreigners. This awareness was born out of the anti-colonialism attitude and attitude to refuse to submit to the feet of the colonial. They certainly had done a number of deliberations to determine the right way to defeat the Dutch troop. This same view was also based on the knowledge of the Dutch's actions in a number of neighboring areas of Kerinci, such as in Jambi and the highlands of Minangkabau which adversed local residents. The Kerinci people, of course, had heard the heroic story of the Paderi war (1821-1837) and other bursts of battle that inspired their fighting path (Teitler, 2004; Madjid, 2017b; and Wahyudi, 2017).

Social solidarity shown by Kerinci society was also born from their obedience to the leader. In the traditional governance structure, the existence of the leader was not



**Picture 4:**  
Some Traditional Kerinci's Weapon that was Found  
in the House of Haji Abdul Razak, an Ancestor of Depati Parbo  
(Sourced: Private Photo)

only seen as a representation of the people, but also an appreciation for the tradition that had been run for generations. Being a *Depati* in Kerinci was not an easy task, because he must have specifications, such as: (1) *Gemuk badannya*, or fat body, which means to have extensive knowledge; (2) *Gedang kelaso/ gedang leher*, which means that if he needed a little money, he did not ask his nephew; (3) *Simbal ekor*, i.e. attention and empathy with the fate of the child and his nephew; and (4) *Langsing kokok*, i.e. his saying must be true, brave, do not violate the customs, and *syara'* or provisions of religion (Arzam, 2016:74).

Intensity of Kerinci war slowly receded when the Dutch troop managed to catch Depati Parbo in August 1903. By the Dutch colonial court, he was sentenced disposal in Ternate in North Maluku. The Dutch East Indies government got what they had dreamed, that was to promote plantations in inland Sumatra. The existence of Kayu Aro tea garden that still exists to this day is one of the results initiated by the government of the Dutch East Indies. There were several other plantations which were opened by the Europeans with the contract system, such as coffee plantations in Sanggaran Agung (Madjid, 2017b; Wahyudi, 2017; and interview with Respondent A, 6/8/2017).

## CONCLUSION

Kerinci is an uncharted territory in the writing of the history of Indonesia. The scarcity of resources and discontinuity of discourse have become the reasons, why the historians or chroniclers seem reluctant to parse various discourses of the past of the area. It must be admitted that the study of the history of the Home Land is still filled with provisions of popular or unpopular, or important or unimportant to examine. If it is continuously made as a benchmark, it has the potential to cut small steps of the micro to move towards the more national history.

Depati Parbo and Kerinci War is a decent theme to discuss in a broader space. It is important remembering that in the future, historical discourse is demanded to be dynamic; and one of the preconditions is the enrichment of the historical materials. Through the story of Depati Parbo and war he followed, the people of the world are able to know that in the inland of Sumatra, there is a history of resistance which is also urgent as other regions. The cohesiveness to fight against the colonial is the result of social solidarity that grew from the nuance of freedom and sovereignty that have previously been held and maintained for centuries.

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**Depatis of Kerinci**

(Source: <https://kerinciinspirasi.blogspot.com>, 2/3/2018)

Leadership in Kerinci consists of several federation areas, namely: *Tiga Helai Kain* (Three Pieces of Cloth) in South Kerinci and *Delapan Helai Kain* (Eight Pieces of Cloth) in North Kerinci. These areas are divided into several *mendapo* (village level) and *dusun* (sub-village), each led by a *depati*. Each *depati* in Kerinci governs his territory independently. If there is a large-scale problem, they will hold deliberation and implement the consensus, such as when fighting against the Dutch East Indies troops.