



First published in Aliran Monthly

The seeds of independence had been sowed long before the existence of Umno, notes **Hishamuddin Yahaya**

. This is a tribute to the unsung heroes of the Merdeka struggle.

Can Umno’s claim that they fought for the country’s independence stand the test of time? The veracity of this claim is now shrouded with doubt. A book in bahasa, entitled Anak Merdeka, written by Haji Salleh Majid and published in 1991, exposed the fallacy of this claim. The author was no politician but an ordinary man who lived to witness the political development of this country evolving from the 1940s to the day of Merdeka.

Early attempts to gain independence

Early attempts to achieve independence were mostly unrecorded. For example, in the early 1940s and before the Japanese occupation of Malaya, Ishak Haji Mohammed (commonly

known as Pak Sako), together with an Indonesian delegation, surreptitiously went to Japan soliciting Japanese help to fight for the independence of their respective countries. This was followed by Soekarno meeting Dr Burhanuddin Al-Helmy to plan strategies for both countries' independence. Though both attempts failed for various reasons, the seeds of independence had been sowed long before the existence of Umno.

Ishak Haji Mohamad's secret trip to Japan was risky business, inviting prosecution for treason, punishable by death, but such was the dexterity of this pure nationalist. Though he was in the colonial civil service at that time, his patriotism and love for the country was never sacrificed to the colonial masters he served. In fact it was while in Japan that the name Sako was begotten. The Japanese found it difficult to spell and pronounce his name Ishak, so they called him Isako. Later it became his pen name, Pak Sako.

Indonesia's independence

The independence of Indonesia on 17 August 1945 triggered fire in the hearts of Malays of Indonesian descent. After all, Indonesia was the “motherland”, separated only by the narrow Straits of Malacca. Both were Malay lands; and if one could gain independence, why not the other? Furthermore, an independent Indonesia could provide moral and material help to Malays in the struggle for independence. Thus, begun the dawn of Merdeka.

For the full article, click [here](#).

“Lembu punya susu, sapi dapat nama”

Thursday, 07 January 2010 01:42
