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# Dari Bayangan, Kami Bertarung ”From the shadow we fight”. The ‘silent warriors’ of Indonesia’s electronic supply chain.

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## Abstract

*Dari Bayangan, Kami Bertarung*

”From the shadow we fight”. The ‘silent warriors’ of Indonesia’s electronic supply chain.

Batam, located in the Riau archipelago of Indonesia, has been home to a series of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) since 1989, primarily focused on electronics manufacturing for major global companies. Among these facilities is one operated by a top microchip supplier where workers are exposed to chemical contamination levels that have been illegal in the United States since 1985. Batam has repealed its environmental protection laws for thirty years, and its inhabitants lack basic infrastructure, such as potable water and waste-disposal systems. Originally a fishing village, the island’s resident population has surged from 7,000 in 1970 to 1,500,000 today, mainly due to Indonesian economic migrants.

This paper is based on an ethnographic study conducted during night training sessions of Pencak Silat—a traditional Indonesian martial art held by a confraternity: the Persaudaraan Setia Hati Terate (PSHT). In Batam, the author became a PSHT member at a school run by sixty-three workers from the Batamindo industrial complex, a global site for manufacturing microchips, computers, and mobile phones. While international literature has focused on migrant labour regimes in South East Asia (Pun, 2007; Chang, 2022), no academic works have examined the labour conditions and subjectivities of Batam workers.

A longstanding relationship exists in Indonesia between Silat, labour, subjectivity, and anticolonial resistance. During the colonial period, Dutch authorities forcibly relocated Silat masters and employed them as supervisors on plantations of migrant indentured labour. As resentment against the alienating conditions of forced migration grew, some masters began teaching Pencak Silat clandestinely at night to the peasant labourers. By breaking with the original doctrine, which reserved the art of Silat for the nobility, PSHT emerged as an underground organisation dedicated to organising first strikes, then armed resistance against Dutch colonial occupation.

The PHST masters in Batam are Indonesian economic migrants moved by feelings of *heroism*, faith, and migratory socio-economic aspiration. By juxtaposing this contemporary context with its historical antecedents, I argue that for workers in the electronics supply chain, night trainings (pelatihan) remain peculiar moments where forms of mutualism, solidarity, and subjectivation emerge to address the local impact of uneven global development.

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