

CONTESTATION, NEGOTIATION AND CULTURE IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF RIAU'S IDENTITY

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*Akan berpisah jua kita akhirnya, Jakarta
dari Negeri kami yang Jauh
kau terlihat semakin angkuh
tak tersentuh*

*55 tahun kalian bangun
tasik yang penuh air mata
dan kami tenggelam di dalamnya
(Ediruslan Pe amenriza)*

We are finally going to part, Jakarta
From our distant land
You seem increasingly arrogant
Untouchable

55 years of development
Has produced a pond full of tears
In which we are sinking

Introduction

Debate about Indonesia's future as a unitary state has spread in the post New Order period. The authority of the government to defend the unity of nation has been challenged since the state failed to provide equitable development for all regions since Independence. In the beginning of Reform period, when Habibie headed the country, ideas of federalist state became a quite popular in public discussions and in the mass media (Parera & Koekerits, 1999; Nasution Et.al., 1999). This was very different from the New Order, when the notion of federalism had been politically sensitive, considering the traumatic experience of the Federal State of Indonesia (RIS - Republik Indonesia Serikat) in the 1950s. As well, in the same period, at least four regions (Papua, Aceh, Riau and South Moluccas) have expressed a desire to separate from Indonesia. This shows that the unity of the Indonesian nation is wavering (Aveling & Kingsbury, 2003).¹

Acts no: 22 and no: 25/1999 were issued principally to placate those separatist elements and thus secure the existence of the unitary state of Indonesia (NKRI – Negara Kesatuan

¹ Since the New Order, every 25th of April, the South Moluccas Republic (RMS – Republik Maluku Selatan) based in Maluku has regularly celebrated its anniversary (Kompas, April 04, 2005).



Republik Indonesia). By these Laws, national solidarity and attachment to the unitary state were revived by providing more space for local and regional ideas to be expressed within the national sphere.²

As a result of these Acts tensions in the regions have been significantly reduced, although they have not quelled the spirit of separatism in some regions such as Aceh and Papua.³ Moreover, over the last five years, the implementation of these Acts has not resolved the problem of the imbalance of power between the centre and the regions. On the contrary, there has been a revival of local identity in the regions. The strong nationalist feeling in the regions, previously promoted by New Order's policies, is seemingly disappearing.

This paper will discuss issues related to the revival of Riau Malay identity. The paper is divided in to two sections. The first section explains the historical background of Riau's politics in the Indonesian nation-state, and how Riau's nationalism has developed in this context.

The second section is about contestation and negotiation in the reconstruction of Riau's identity. In this section the discussion will focus on claims about Riau's identity and how the boundaries of identity are being reconstructed. It will also investigate how Malay identity is used in political and economic spheres in everyday life.

Questioning the Nation: Repositioning Riau in the Indonesian Nation-State

National unity is constructed through the narrative of the nation by which stories, images, symbols and rituals represent "shared" meanings of nationhood (Barker,2003:253).

In his famous book "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism" (1991:6), Ben Anderson states that the nation is "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". Smith (1991:14) highlights some characteristics of the nation, such as its members having their own homeland and sharing a common historical myths and memories. This view is supported by Spinner, who argues that common culture, language and history are important elements to be shared among members in order to build attachment to the nation (1994:27).

² Acts no: 22 and no: 25/1999 was replaced by Acts no:32 and no:33/2004

³ However, at the last informal meeting between Indonesia and Free Aceh Movement (GAM – Gerakan Aceh Merdeka), which is still ongoing in Helsinki, Finland, mediated by an international NGO called CMI (Crisis management Initiative), GAM agreed to discuss the issues on the frame of NKRI. Thus, GAM acknowledged the unitary state of Indonesia. They also reduced their demands by not asking for self determination or separation, but for self governance.



This section shows how the Indonesian nation as an imagined community is being challenged by its members who live in Riau. It is questioned because the historical memories of the nation are not defined and shared in the same way by Riau people. For them, past experience has taught them that being part of Indonesian nation-state, has caused Riau to suffer from state exploitation, causing impoverishment (Mubyarto,1992).

Experiences of being dominated by the centre politically, economically and culturally, have affected the perceptions of Riau people towards the Indonesian state. They claim the centre government has maltreated them by making their region poor and backward

Despite the fact that *bahasa Indonesia*, the official language, is rooted in Malay (the main local language of Riau), the national history of being a nation which was constructed and disseminated by the state has not resulted in the attachment of Riau people to the nation. Memories of the past are experienced differently in Riau.

Considering that history is an important element in the construction of nationhood, in this part I will describe several historical events which took place in Riau during the post colonial period of the Indonesian nation-state. We will see how these events are defined and used by the current Riau movement to challenge the state. Also, history is used to legitimate the need for the ethnic resurgence of Malays in Riau. These events are selected according to my discussions with members of the elite, activists, journalists, historians, academics and community leaders regarding the issues of Riau's identity during seven months of fieldwork in Riau in 2004.

These historical events are the formation of Riau province in the end of 1950s, the confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia, and "The Gloomy September 1985 affair" (Peristiwa September 1985 Kelabu). The confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia is frequently referred to by my informants to show how the close ties between Riau people and Malaysians were cut by the national government of Indonesia. Riau and Malay peoples originally came from one Malay kingdom, and used to have close interactions in terms of economic, social and cultural activities. It was the state that divided them as communities by defining the border of the nation-state. The collective memories between Riau people and Malaysians are closer than memories shared between Riau people and the Indonesian nation.

The establishment of Riau province and the "gloomy September 1985 affair" are more related to the issues of state control over Riau. The formation of Riau province took more than 4 years (from 1953 to 1957). Since the process was challenged by the central government, this was claimed as the starting point of Riau's struggle against the state. Prior to its establishment, Riau region had been part of Central Sumatra province that was centred in Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatra. Uniting Riau into Central Sumatra province, which was done by the centre, was believed by many people in Riau to be the cause of underdevelopment in Riau (Tabrani, 2002).

In Riau's political history, "the gloomy September 1985 affair" expresses the maltreatment by Jakarta (Thalib and Samsir, 2002; Tabrani, 2002). The affair happened



in the Riau gubernatorial election on 2nd of September 1985 when Ismail Suko, the candidate who was elected by the DPRD of Riau was forced to resign by the central government. He was forced to hand over to Imam Munandar, the candidate who was supported by Jakarta. Since Ismail Suko was of Riau Malay origin and Imam Munandar was Javanese, this affair became ethnically a problematic issue.

Confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia

Confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia took place between the years 1963 and 1966 in the period of Sukarno's rule. Due to the confrontation, the relationship between the two countries was interrupted (Mackie, 1974; Hamidy, 2002; Luthfi et al., 1977; Poulgrain, 1998)⁴, causing significant inconvenience to Riau since it is directly located on border between the countries. The effects were felt in economic, social and cultural aspects. For example, Riau's economic activities had for hundreds of years relied on both Malaysia and Singapore. Trading, economic transactions, and commodity supplies were occurring between those countries. Also, many Riau people were working in neighbouring countries. Singapore dollars and the Malaysian ringgit were shared currencies in the region. At that time, Riau's economic condition was wealthier than other Indonesian regions since the Malaysian ringgit and Singapore dollars which were mostly kept by the people were more valuable than the Indonesian rupiah. One of my informants describes that his family mostly bought clothes and electronic goods from Singapore since their quality was better than what his relatives had in Padang, West Sumatra.

Culturally, Riau people and Malaysian were very close as they shared histories from the time of the Malacca empire. The Kingdom of Johor in Malaysia and the Kingdom of Riau Lingga in Riau originated from the kingdom of Malacca; most of my informants called it as the Riau-Johor Malay Empire (Barnard, 2001:4; Basarsyah II, 2003). It was the London Treaty of 1824 that divided the kingdom into two. The treaty was signed between the British and Dutch colonial rulers and arranged for the Kingdom of Johor to be ruled by the British, while the Dutch occupied the Kingdom of Riau-Lingga (Hamidy, 1990; Andaya and Andaya, 2001). Separation of the Malay kingdoms into two different "nations", however, did not affect the interaction between them. As my informant in Batam explained, migration and visits between the two regions were common. As an illustration, before the confrontation my informant and his family regularly visited his brothers and aunts who lived in Johor.

The policy of Soekarno to "Crush Malaysia" ("*Ganyang Malaysia*") forced people in Riau to reduce their interaction with relatives who lived in Malaysia. A prominent man of letters who was interviewed shared his sad experiences that he had to decide whether he should stay in Johor or in Riau. He decided to move and stay in Riau with his parents,

⁴ J.A.C. Mackie (1974) explores comprehensively the confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia. He notes the political policy of Soekarno opposing the proposal of Malaysia to extend the Federation of Malaya. Soekarno called this proposal a "neo colonialist project" initiated by the British.



but his elder brother and sisters preferred to stay in Johor. Consequently, during the confrontation, he could not visit them. He said that these experiences were mostly suffered by inhabitants of Riau who lived in islands or coastal areas.⁵ Moreover, when Soekarno decided to fight against Malaysia, many Riau people were forced into a volunteer army which fought against their own relatives.⁶

Additionally, soon after the confrontation was started, Riau which primarily relied on Singapore and Malaysia for commodity exchanges had to stop their economic interaction with the two countries. Riau then had to get commodities from other distant regions of Indonesia. As a consequence, the cost of economic activities was more expensive. Moreover, Riau had to convert their dollar and ringgit currencies to a special currency applied by the state called Riau islands currency (*mata uang Kepulauan Riau – KRP*), since Soekarno issued a policy to stop the distribution of Malaysian Ringgit and Singapore Dollar in Indonesian regions.

Thus, the confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia in the historical memories of Riau people is regarded as a cause of Riau's current poor situation and also as the cause of breaking up the cultural bonds between Malaysian and Riau people who are originally from the same Malay ethnic group (Luthfi et.al. 1977). In this context, the dynamics of Indonesian history have contributed to the growth of nationalism in Riau.

Establishing Riau Province

Up to the end of colonization in Indonesia, Riau's region covered the areas of Riau-Lingga and Indragiri kingdoms. The Dutch Ruler named the region as Residentie Riouw en Onderhoorigheden wherein Tanjungpinang was made the centre of local government (Junus et.al. 2002). After independence, the Indonesian government applied a system of regional government by issuing the Law no 22 of 1948. According to this act, Riau, Jambi and West Sumatra were arranged in one province, namely Central Sumatra province, in which the capital city was located in Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatra (Holland, 1999; Junus et.al. 2002; Luthfi et.al 1977; Hamidy, 2002).

Being part of the Central Sumatra province apparently did not satisfy the local elites of Riau (Luthfi et.al. 1977, Junus et.al. 2002). They claimed that the integration of Riau into the Central Sumatra province did not support the development of their region. They also stated the rights of local tradition were overridden since the province mainly adopted West Sumatran traditions in governing the region (1977:634). From interviews with witnesses who lived during that period, Junus et al. describe economic, political and cultural conditions of Riau which were subordinated to West Sumatra. In cultural

⁵ My informant from Riau mainland said that he lost communication with his relatives from his mother's line who lived in Malaysia since the confrontation. Up to now, he is still trying to find their address in Malaysia, but has not yet succeeded.

⁶ According to Mackie's book (1074:4), this happened in May 1964 when Soekarno declared the "People's Twofold Command" (*Dwi Komando Rakyat - Dwikora*). By that command, Soekarno mobilized the communities to join the confrontation.



aspects, for example, Nagari, a system of village government which originally comes from West Sumatra tradition was applied in Riau. Traditional dances of West Sumatra, such as *Tari Piring* and *Babendi-bendi* dances had been taught to people in Riau instead of the local Riau dances such as *Zapin* and *Joget* (2002:30). As well, in the sector of education, mostly the education infrastructures (school buildings) were located in West Sumatra. Junus et al. underlines the statistics on numbers of secondary schools in the province of Central Sumatra in 1950. Of 27 secondary schools, only four were located in Riau, and only two in Jambi. Moreover, most potential and key positions in the regions were occupied by staff from West Sumatra (2002:31).

Between 1953 and 1957, elites and community leaders in Riau struggled for the separation of Riau from Central Sumatra province. In the last two years, the supporters of this struggle widened to include various elements of Riau people, such as youth organisations and mass organisations. Various strategies, such as personal and formal approaches (through contacting parliament and ministry home affairs), and press or mass media campaigns were implemented. As well, Riau student activists in Jakarta participated in political bargaining with national elites (Luthfi et.al. 1977; Junus et.al. 2002, Tabrani, 2001).

The separation of Riau from the Central Sumatra province was opposed by both the centre in Jakarta and the Forum of Ninik Mamak (Forum of kinship leaders based on matrilineal lineage) in West Sumatra. The Forum of Ninik Mamak claimed that the existence of Riau province would lead to feudalism and ethnocentrism (Junus et.al., 2002). Through personal approaches finally the proposal was accepted by President Soekarno. In August 1957, Riau was declared to be an independent province, separated from the Central Sumatra province. This was legalised by the Emergency Act no.19 of 1957 which was issued by the president. However, in the memories of many Riau people, this struggle is an expression of how the state ignored the interests and aspirations of Riau people.

Gloomy September 1985 Affair: State's Control over Riau Politics

The relationships between Jakarta and Riau reflect the general picture of centre-region relationships in the New Order, and in discussing these issues, I refer to characteristics of the New Order in ruling the country. Liddle (1999:48) lists four strategies of the New Order: coercion by using military intervention, development in which economic growth was used to gain support from society, 'legitimizing symbols' through indoctrination of Pancasila, and institutional building to support its programs and policies. Similarly, Malley (1999:71) claims central domination and coercion through military involvement was the important element used by the New Order in governing the regions.

Three factors played important roles during the New Order period: military force, ideology of development, and political institutions (such as parliament, three political



parties system and bureaucracy). The interplay of these factors supported the strong domination by the centre of the regions.

As part of its 'Defence and security' approach, the New Order utilised military forces to monitor and control the regions. There are ten territorial commands covering the provinces of Indonesia (Liddle, 1999). The military territorial commander outside Java was not appointed from local people, to ensure that they would not develop a local military power outside the centre. This approach was also applied in Riau.⁷ Soon after Confrontation with Malaysia in 1966, the government developed a military base in Riau (LIPI, 2001).⁸

Military men were also engaged in the political institutions of the New Order. Particularly in governmental institutions, retired military officers were appointed to occupy the key positions. As Malley (1999:76) states:

In 1970, twenty of the country's twenty-six governors were from the military and a survey of six provinces suggests that about 60 percent of all district heads (*bupati*) including mayors (*walikota*) also hailed from the armed forces.

The six provinces which were surveyed are Riau, East Java, North Sulawesi, Central Java, South Sulawesi, and West Sumatra. The strong domination of Jakarta towards Riau was thus reflected in the position of governors. Since 1958, of the ten Riau governors only the last was a civilian. He was appointed in November 2003.

A case study of Ismail Suko, an eliminated governor, shows how local politics were controlled by the elites in Jakarta.

In September 1985, Riau prepared to run an election to select the new governor, who would run the region for the next five years. According to the Indonesian legal system, the election would be made by the DPRD (regional assembly). Prior to the election, the DPRD sent the names of candidates to president. There were three candidatures, one of them being Major General Imam Munandar, a Javanese, who was the previous governor. He was supported by Golkar leaders in Jakarta, and certainly by the president and national political elites, since the majority were affiliated to Golkar. As a matter of fact, the Golkar National committee had officially declared Munandar as Golkar's candidate for the gubernatorial election. Prior to the election, Golkar leaders in Jakarta held a

⁷ In my informants' views, this approach had caused "Javanisation" among the Riau elites working in the government institutions. Also, this caused a limited access of Riau people to occupy strategic positions in the local government offices.

⁸ This was continuously operated in the New Order period. As well, in Megawati's period, the State military base in Riau remained. Recently, there is a debate concerning the plan of the United States to become involved in security activities in the Malacca straits. As this plan is claimed to fight against terrorism, the United States has requested the Indonesian government to be directly involved with them in operational security activities in the straits (Koran Tempo, June 11, 2004).



briefing and invited members of Riau DPRD from the Golkar faction, to ensure that Munandar would win. Munandar also gained support from the Department of Home Affairs and military headquarters (Malley, 1999).

Another candidature was Ismail Suko. Although he was also a Golkar member, he was not popular among the national elites and Golkar. His participation was aimed at securing the votes to be given to Munandar. However, since he was a Riau Malay, he got sympathy from people in Riau, and also from some DPRD members.

On Election Day, 2nd of September 1985, 300 members of Regional People's Representative Council gave their votes for the new Riau governor. Surprisingly, Suko received a higher vote than Munandar. Apparently, most of Golkar members in DPRD who were Malay decide to give their votes to Suko. This outcome obviously was not accepted by Golkar in Jakarta, and Suko was forced to resign from his candidacy.⁹

In Riau this affair has been regarded as a reflection of Jakarta's oppression towards Riau people, and Suko became a symbol of Riau's struggle against Jakarta, the centre. This is contributed by the fact that he was a civilian, not a military officer, and he originally came from Riau (Tabrani, 2002; Heri, 2003; Abadi, 2003).

The three events above demonstrate the memories of being part of the nation in the perceptions of many Riau people. The Confrontation has a significant meaning in national history as it expressed how the Indonesian nation was united to defend the country. However, in many Riau people's memories it was a bitter time when they were forced to lose and split from their families. Meanwhile, for many Riau people, the formation of Riau province and the gloomy September 1985 affair expressed how the state ignored Riau.

Barker (2003) argues that if the state cannot fulfil its members' expectations, the members may lose their respect for it, and then there will be a crisis of legitimacy for the state. This has obviously occurred in Indonesia. Those histories, then, are been reasons why many Riau people have become involved in the movement to revive Riau's identity and dignity. Also, history is used to reposition Riau in the nation-state.

Contestation and Negotiation in the Reconstruction of Riau's Identity

The period of Reformasi (reform) in Indonesia is regarded as a moment of change for the regions. Previously representation of locality in economic and political terms was marginalised; now, it is the time to present the locality in the national arena. This is

⁹ Most of my informants refer to this case when we discussed the political oppression of the centre against Riau province in the New Order period. As well, they claim Suko as symbol of Riau struggling towards the centre. Also, they mostly acknowledge the elected present governor, Rusli Zainal, who is the son in law of Suko as compensation for what the New Order had done to Suko.



regarded as a necessary condition for democratisation in Indonesia. Representation of locality is expressed through readopting local characteristics, culture and traditions at regional level.

This process is also taking place in Riau. When the reform period began in 1998, many Riau people, most of them were activists, community leaders, academics and elites regarded it as a moment to change Riau's condition from that of a marginal region in Indonesia with a relatively high level of poverty to one of being a respected province. They became involved in a movement to have Riau's culture, tradition and customs restored to community life. The earlier national government had subordinated Riau's identity by promoting national culture. Riau traditions and customs were excluded from the national identity (FKPMR, 2000). Applying Riau's culture and traditions in everyday life of Riau inhabitant is considered the way for Riau's people become the masters of their own land. As well, it may develop local authority to manage their political, economic and cultural affairs. In particular, this local movement expected that the Riau government should be able to control its own natural resources.

To build solidarity among Riau people, the discourse of the Riau's bitter experiences during united in Indonesia nation-state has been awakened through remembering and celebrating historical memories of Riau's struggle against the state. This is done through recalling the collective memories of Kongres Rakyat Riau I (KRR I) which was held to support the formation of Riau province in 1957.

Kongres Rakyat Riau I was carried in 31st of January – 2nd of February 1956 in Pekanbaru. On this occasion, various elements of Riau people got together to share their perspectives and to back up the movement led by the elites to demand an autonomous province. This event was believed to be a significant contributor to the establishment of Riau province.

Taking the same title and the same date as KRR I, Kongres Rakyat Riau II was held in Pekanbaru in 29th of January to 2nd of February 2000. Elites, activists, academics, and community leaders who were concerned about Riau's situation gathered to review Riau's position. This event was expected to bring the same spirit as the first Kongres. Here, Kongres Rakyat Riau was used as a symbol of Riau's victory in increasing its bargaining position in relation to the state. As well, it is regarded as a symbol of the resurgence of Riau's identity.

There are similarities between those two Kongres Rakyat Riau. Both congresses involved local elites, activists, academics, community leaders; and both were used by those participants to gain support from the Riau people (The first movement was dealing with the formation of Riau province, while the second movement was related to the issue of repositioning Riau in the Indonesian nation-state). As well, both congresses were used as a justification for the Riau movement, on the grounds that because the congresses involved participation by the people, the demands came from the bottom. In some of my Malay informants' views, even the results of the two congresses were relatively similar,



i.e. the independence of Riau. KRR I demanded Riau separate from Sumatera Tengah province, while KRR II supported the separation of Riau from the Indonesian state.

Interestingly, in both Kongres Rakyat Riau appeared the important discourse of “Rakyat Riau” and “Putra daerah”. These terms basically defined the borders of Riau identity, the boundaries that constructed who were insiders and outsiders (“us” and “them”). The definition of “Rakyat Riau” (Riau citizens) in KRR I was¹⁰ “members of the Indonesian nation who live in Riau, those who stay in Riau because of working, living and married in this region regardless their ethnicities...” (Luthfi et.al., 1977:646).

The above definition clearly covered all Riau inhabitants who lived and worked in Riau. There was no argument about the position of non Malay ethnic groups because they were respected as part of “Rakyat Riau”. The border between “Us” and “Them” were created to refer to those who lived in Riau and those who did not. The demarcation line was based on geography, not ethnicity.

In KRR II the definition of “Putra Daerah” was not definitely stated as part of its written recommendations. However it appeared in the discussion session. It also manifested in many items of its recommendations which underlined the importance of ethnic Malay principles to be implemented in community activities in Riau. For example, the social cultural recommendations of KRRI are stated as follows:

1. Reviving the roles of customary laws and institutions in society in Riau
2. Rebuilding and designing the contemporary educational system (aspects of modernisation in science and technology) which accommodates and stimulates Riau Malay tradition/culture (language, customs, religion) in order to rehabilitate Riau Malay culture.
3. Forming local laws/regulations that protect the existence of Malay culture from cultural distortion caused by acculturation
4. Reviving and developing Malay cultural norms as a basis for regional laws
5. Formulating policies or local laws/regulations to protect the labour force who originally come from Riau. It should be implemented in the composition of labour in companies/factories: 60% should be Riau people
6. Insist the local government form local regulations concerning Malay clothing to be worn in the schools and offices (private and public) every Friday¹²... (FKPMR,2000)

¹⁰ Debate about “Putera asli Riau” appeared in KRR I as it was stimulated by one of participants who asked about the definition of “Rakyat Riau” used in the Kongres’ title.

¹² This item is clearly intended to develop boundaries to establish the Riau Malay identity. Clothing, language, customs, are among others which needed to identify who is part of a group (Spinner,1994:166)

¹⁴ ... para tokoh masyarakat Riau yang tergabung dalam Forum Komunikasi Pemuka Masyarakat Riau (FKPMR), telah menetapkan sebuah rekomendasi yang terkait dengan rencana suksesi Gubernur Riau mendatang. Rekomendasi yang dihasilkan dalam Musyawarah Besar (Mubes) I FKPMR, minggu lalu, itu menegaskan bahwa Gubernur Riau mendatang harus berasal dari orang Melayu asli, termasuk juga istrinya (Kompas Online, 31 Maret 2003)



A prominent student activist who was actively involved in Kongres Rakyat Riau II explained the notion of “Putra Daerah” was deliberately not included in the recommendations out of respect for other participants who come from other ethnic groups, such as Bataks, Javanese, Minang, Bugis etc. As well it is a strategy to gain support from all Riau inhabitants regardless of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. However, he indicated that point no. 5 about the composition of labour in the companies was an expression of the need to hire 60% of originally Malay Riau workers in the companies located in Riau. He further clarified that issues of “Putra Daerah” had already come up in public discussion before the Kongres Rakyat Riau II. In particular, after the New Order was replaced by the reform government, Riau conducted a gubernatorial election. The demand to select a candidate of Riau Malay origin to be the new governor was explicitly declared. Since Saleh Djasit, a Malay, was elected as the governor, thus, for the initiator and organiser of the KRR II, the issue of “Putra Daerah” did not explicitly need to be put in its agenda. However, issues of “Putra Daerah” continue to echo following the KRR II.

The difference in definitions of “Putra Daerah” between KRR I and KRR II demonstrates how the boundaries of identity are dynamic and contextualised rather than fixed. As Malesevic and Haugaard (2002:17) state “boundaries are flexible and constantly reproduced through social interaction”.

In the case of Riau, having been a province for more than 40 years did not actually change the condition of Riau Malay people very much. They remained second class citizens in their land (Kompas, October, 12, 2004). Poverty in Riau was experienced more by the Riau Malay communities who lived in coastal areas compared to other ethnic groups.

The notion of “Putra Daerah” is used to create borders between insiders and outsiders. However, its meaning is applied dynamically depend on the context. The objective of KRR I was to establish Riau province, still in the context of the Indonesian nation-state. Subordination between ethnic groups, Malay and non Malay who lived in Riau areas, was not an issue at that time. However, KRR II was directly aimed at challenging the nation-state as it was regarded as the cause of subordination of Riau Malay people through marginalising Riau’s culture. Likewise, Javanisation through various state policies, such as transmigration caused Riau Malay people suffering and poverty. Hence, “Putra Daerah” is politically used to claim access by Riau Malay people to political and economic resources.

To show the dynamic application of “Putra Daerah” in the following paragraph, I will provide some illustrations of how members of this social category are defined. Firstly, the criteria are fixedly implemented in the context of access to politic and economic resources, such as finding a job and getting promotion in the work place, both in private and public sectors. My informant shared his experience of being Minang (West Sumatra): he failed to gain appointment as a teacher in a public school because he is not Malay and was not born in Riau, though he has lived in Riau since the age of five. Another



informant who works as an assistant lecturer in the state university failed to get access to a scholarship since her name revealed her North Sumatran origin.

Secondly, “Putra Daerah” is exercised relatively loosely if it applies to a person who brought renown to Riau at both local and national levels. For instance in the case of Syuman Hasibuan, a prominent man of letters. He wrote a lot of fiction books and also became a political activist who contributed to Riau’s political struggle against the state. From his family name, it is clear that he comes from a clan in North Sumatra. However, as he grew up in Riau and spent his entire life there, his works contributed to the development of the literature of Riau and the nation; he is respected as a hero (Asril et.al.,2002). Most of my informants (historians, journalists and academics), agreed to claim him as a “Putra Daerah”.

Another illustration of the way notions of “Putra Daerah” were implemented at the local level is shown in the way discourse of “Putra Tempatan” (local Sons) is used at district (*kabupaten*) level. Decentralisation in current Indonesia is applied at this level; therefore the *kabupaten* has become the centre of political and economic activities. Consequently, there is a competition between *kabupaten* even in one province to control and exploit their resources for the development of their *kabupaten*. For this purpose, at *kabupaten* level, the boundaries of identity are recreated to define whose could get access to and participate in the political and economic activities of the *kabupaten*.

The borders for claiming identity at *kabupaten* level are then built on a geographical basis. In this context, “Us” and “Them” are decided according to those who live and are born in that district. For example, Malay who was born and lives in *kabupaten* Kampar district cannot get access to work in *kabupaten* Bengkalis. Hence, Malayness is not necessarily the only element to classify the identity. This also explains the heterogeneity of Malayness.

How is women’s identity defined currently in Riau?

...Community leaders in Riau who are associated in the Riau Community Leaders Communication Forum (FKPMR-Forum Komunikasi Pemuka Masyarakat Riau), have declared a recommendation in regard to the Riau gubernatorial election. This recommendation arose at the first FKPMR Convention, which was held last week, and the recommendation urges that the next Riau governor, including his wife, should come from Malay ethnic group (Kompas Online, 31 Maret 2003).¹⁴

The above quotation has two meanings: firstly, ethnic identity is a prerequisite for candidature. Secondly, it indicates the importance of women’s role in supporting his husband in political competition. (Interestingly, it also assumes governors are invariably men. What about the husband of a female governor?)

Nira Yuval-Davis in her argument concerning “women, ethnicity and nation” notes that woman has two roles i.e. as a biological producer and cultural producer. As biological



producer women should produce new members of their community to maintain its community. Similarly, as a cultural producer, women should maintain the continuity of her collective norms and traditions from one generation to another generation (Yuval-Davis, 1993; 1994; 1998; 2001).

In the reconstruction of cultural or ethnic identity, gender relations occupy a central position. Collective membership is based on ascribed status or blood. Women's reproductive capacity to bear children is used to label their roles to look after and maintain the collective existence.

The case of Riau gubernatorial election illustrates women's roles and status which are attached to their husbands. Their role is to support their husbands' status by maintaining the ethnic identity of husbands.

Considering the recommendations of Kongres Rakyat Riau II, seemingly the statements were gender neutral, means there are no specific items directed to women. However, being neutral is not necessarily gender sensitive. The following is the statements related to women as an outcome of KRR II:

1. Gedung Wanita (the Women's Building) is renamed Wanita Melayu yang Berjasa (Famous Malay Women).
2. Provide Riau Malay women with opportunities to participate in various sectors of development programs in Riau in regard to their capacities.
3. Formulate regulations concerning entertainment facilities on the basis of Riau Malay culture. Prohibiting gambling, prostitution, and drugs... (FKPMR, 2000)

Although the third item which regulates prostitution issues is not directly targeted at women, however, the handling of prostitution in many Indonesian regions still applies patriarchal perspectives. This would affect women, as they occupy the lowest position in the sex industry. Raids against prostitution mainly harm women. Moreover as Malay culture is defined by its characteristics of being practising Moslems and using Malay language and customs, women's status is influenced by the way Islam is interpreted. In this context, as males dominate the interpretation of the Holy book, women's place tends to be as second-class citizens. The statement of FKPMR concerning the governor's wife obviously illustrated women's status in Riau.

Conclusion

In Riau history, Kongres Rakyat Riau is an icon of local struggle against the state. It has two meanings: as a legitimation to revive local identity; and as a medium to review attachment and relationships to the nation-state.



Exclusiveness is sometimes regarded as necessary to maintain ethnic identity. Thus the collective defines the members and non members of the group (Spinner, 1994:X). Here, “notions of “Putra Daerah” are used to claim membership and to develop exclusivity.

“Putra Daerah” is a manifestation of identity according to which the collective consciousness is developed. As well, this is used to build solidarity and cohesion of the group. In relation to other collective members, the concept of “Putra Daerah” as a reflection of Riau’s identity is constructed to develop collective boundaries which divide the insiders and outsiders of the group.

Ideally, democratic principles respect equality; however, identity expresses inequality because it defines who is dominant and subordinate in a social community. Also it separates the insiders and outsiders with different rights. Moreover, the identity is not merely applied in the private domain, but also in the public sphere.

In daily practice at the community level, the collective sentiments manifested in the notion of “Putra Daerah” may create problems, as this notion is not only used as a social category to define collective boundaries, but also as a strategic tool to control access to political and economic power in Riau. Worsley (1994) highlights these issues in the following statement:

Cultural traits are not absolute or simply intellectual categories, but are invoked to provide identities which legitimize claims to rights. They are strategies or weapons in competitions over scarce social goods.



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