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ISSN : 1693 - 8356



AKSES

JURNAL PENELITIAN ILMU SOSIAL dan BUDAYA

Volume VI, Nomor 2 Agustus 2009



Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik
Universitas Bengkulu

AKSES	Vol. VI	No. 2	Hal. 74 - 140	Bengkulu Agustus 2009	ISSN 1693 - 8356
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ISSN 1693 - 8356



ISSN : 1693 - 8356



AKSES

Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Sosial dan Budaya
Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik
Universitas Bengkulu

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Terbitan Pertama Kali : Februari 2004
Frekuensi Terbit : 2 kali Setahun (Februari & Agustus)

AKSES

JURNAL PENELITIAN ILMU SOSIAL dan BUDAYA
FAKULTAS ILMU SOSIAL dan ILMU POLITIK
UNIVERSITAS BENGKULU

VOLUME VI, NOMOR 2 AGUSTUS 2009

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THE REFORM AGENDA IN RIAU: DECENTRALISATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

By:

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ABSTRACT

Artikel ini membahas tentang agenda reformasi yang bergulir di Riau mulai 1998 hingga 2004 berkaitan dengan pelaksanaan desentralisasi. Ketika itu – bersamaan dengan provinsi-provinsi kaya sumberdaya alam lainnya – para mahasiswa, aktivis LSM, kaum intelektual, pemuka masyarakat dan tokoh adat di Pekanbaru (ibukota Provinsi Riau) mendesak Pemerintah Pusat untuk memberikan otonomi daerah (melaksanakan desentralisasi). Mereka mengancam akan memerdekakan diri (memisahkan Riau dari NKRI) apabila tuntutan ini tidak segera dipenuhi. Berdasarkan UU No. 22/1999 dan UU No. 25/1999 akhirnya desentralisasi dilaksanakan di seluruh Indonesia dengan memberikan kewenangan yang lebih luas kepada kabupaten dan kota untuk mengatur urusannya sendiri (otonomi daerah). Meskipun telah memperkuat posisi Riau dalam bidang politik, ekonomi, dan sosial-budaya, pelaksanaan desentralisasi (pemberian otonomi daerah) terbukti tidak memperlemah integrasi nasional di Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The fall of the New Order regime in mid-1998 was accompanied by a change in Indonesians' expectation of their government. Indonesia went from being seen as authoritarian and centralised to being seen as, or at least expected to be, more reformist, democratic and decentralised (Sulistiyanto & Erb 2005, 6-7). This change was due to both internal and external forces. The major internal factor was the loudly expressed public anger about the KKN and the recent economic failures of the Soeharto government. A related external factor was because of global trends strengthening the neo-liberal agenda's argument that pro-market economics, local autonomy and democracy are all connected. These goals were supported by multilateral institutions, like the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the ADB (Asian Development Bank), and the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) (see Sulistiyanto & Erb 2005, 7; Seymour & Turner 2002, 35; Turner 2003, 2).

Instead of just following the global trend, however, domestic forces have played a

significant role in hastening the implementation of decentralisation in this country. A strong demand for decentralisation had recently emerged particularly from resource-rich provinces, like Riau (see Sulistiyanto & Erb 2005, 6). The dispute against the national government dates from the 1980s. During 1999 to 2001 most Riau students and NGO activists together with other local elites — i.e. community and *adat* (customary) leaders, intellectuals, and politicians — demanded that the central government promptly undertake decentralisation.

The reform period from 1998 to 2004 had brought a new expectation that Indonesia could design a better governmental system. Several important aspects of governance had been identified for reform. As an important element in this decentralisation was taken into account since it had been waited for over a long time by the Indonesian people. The implementation of decentralisation, based on Laws No. 22/1999 and No. 25/1999,¹ was

¹ Subsequently on 15 October 2004 replaced by Laws No. 32/2004 and No. 33/2004.

intended to provide more authority and wealth to the regions "in a bid to satisfy the many who felt that they had been increasingly disenfranchised in the highly concentrated and centralised New Order system" (Sulistiyanto & Erb 2005, 2). Accordingly, the supporters of the reform movement in Riau expected that the implementation of decentralisation would allow their region to manage its own governmental affairs and get a larger share of the revenues generated from local economic resources.

The main reason for Riau people in demanding decentralisation was the perceived failure of the central government's strong hegemony upon local political and economic affairs during the New Order period. This is related to Sulistiyanto and Erb's statement (2005, 1) that many people outside Java felt that they had never enjoyed the results of development programs conducted by the New Order regime with its practicing of corruption, collusion and nepotism. Accordingly, as Sulistiyanto and Erb (2005, 6) noted, they disputed the centre. In addition, the Centre's dropping in of Riau governors and other senior officials during the New Order period had made Riau people feel politically 'humiliated' (see Rab 2002, 15). The unification of '*kebudayaan nasional*' ('national culture') during the New Order period, wherein the Javanese culture was dominant, had also contributed to marginalising the indigenous ethnicity of Riau (Suryadi 2005, 131). This cultural marginalisation had been used by the pro-reform camp in Riau as one of the crucial issues to demand to be changed, besides the centre's domination of political power and the exploitation of natural resources. This 'national' cultural unification indeed has contributed to a revival of ethno-nationalism, not only in Riau (see Faucher 2005; Wee 2002) but also elsewhere in Indonesia, such as in West Sumatra (see Biezeveld 2007, 203-223) and in western Flores (see Erb 2007, 247-274). Hence the reform period contributed to political, economic, and socio-cultural transformation in wide areas of Indonesia.

RESEARCH FINDING

The Implementation of Decentralisation in Riau

Together with other provinces in Indonesia, Riau started adopting the 1999 decentralisation laws from 1 January 2001. The implementation of such a new policy brought about several issues related to its motives, goals, expectations, obstacles, solutions, and achievements. The Indonesian government had set up the motives and goals in implementing decentralisation. As stated in Law No. 22/1999, decentralisation (regional autonomy) in Indonesia was carried out to deal with the domestic political situation and the challenge of global competition. Hence both internal and external forces had contributed to shifting the way the Indonesian government manages the country from a centralised to a decentralised political system. Their effectiveness were not equal, the internal forces were stronger than the external.

As stated in Law No. 25/1999, the main goals of the decentralisation implemented in Indonesia from 2001 to 2004 were to give opportunities for the regions to boost democracy and improve government performance in delivering public services as well as conducting development programs for the improvement of people's welfare. Hence the implementation of decentralisation in Indonesia post-New Order period was and continued to be intended to achieve two main objectives; the improvement of government performance and of people's welfare.

Since the implementation of decentralisation was partly driven by the demand from the regions, including Riau, it is necessary to understand the motives of people in this province in demanding decentralisation.² The Riau provincial

² The demand for the reform, including decentralisation, in Riau was initiated by thousands of university students, NGO activists, intellectuals, as well as community and customary leaders who lived in Pekanbaru in the form of street demonstrations and going directly to Jakarta. This action was then supported

government's *Rencana induk otonomi daerah provinsi Riau* (Master plan of Riau province for regional autonomy) (2005, 1) stated that its motive for demanding decentralisation was to get a wider sphere in making development policies and delivering development programs, while the main goal given as its justification for implementing decentralisation was to accelerate the achievement of people's welfare. Hence the formally stated motives and goal of the Riau government was the same as those formulated by the national government in its regional autonomy laws.

Although the Riau government had identified motives and a goal in implementing decentralisation, not every aim was visible. Several provincial bureaucrats and politicians of Riau stated to me that the motive behind the demand for decentralisation was to get wider political authority and larger funds for economic development and people's welfare (Interviews with four senior provincial government officials of Riau and the Deputy Head of the Riau DPRD, June-August 2003). From my interviews with sixteen bureaucrats and politicians of Riau at both provincial and city/district levels during June to October 2003, their stated goals in demanding decentralisation can be summarised as follows: (i) to obtain more political power by holding the key positions in the government offices; (ii) to gain more authority in utilising local economic resources; (iii) to get a larger proportion of revenue distribution; and (iv) to increase local people's prosperity. In the early reform period these objectives were those used by many members of Riau elites, including provincial bureaucrats and politicians, community and customary leaders, intellectuals, as well as student and NGO activists, to push the central government under President B.J. Habibie to undertake decentralisation as soon as possible (Interview with the Deputy Head of Riau DPRD, 17 June 2003). An obvious and overt justification for

by the provincial government, both its bureaucrats and the DPRD members.

this demand was that Riau was one of the resource-richest provinces in Indonesia, but more than 40% of its households in 1999 were still living below the poverty line (see *Pola dasar pembangunan daerah provinsi Riau tahun 2001-2005*, 6 - 7).³

The implementation of decentralisation in Indonesia brought a set of expectations. As with the bureaucrats and politicians, reformist supporters in Riau hoped that decentralisation would improve people's welfare. From my interviews with thirty four key informants in June to October 2003, involving Riau community and customary leaders, intellectuals, student and NGO activists, as well as journalists, the expectations of Riau people in demanding decentralisation can be grouped as follows: (i) generating of more people's welfare thereby alleviating poverty; (ii) easier access to key positions in the government offices; (iii) improvement of public services; (iv) provision of adequate funds for economic development; and (v) a more just distribution between Riau and the centre of the revenue from the exploitation of local economic resources.

The motives and goals stated above indicate that the demand for decentralisation was mainly for political and economic reasons. The demand for socio-cultural reform was only an additional agenda item that could be fulfilled through decentralisation when the provincial government had gained wider authorities to make policies in managing local affairs. As decentralisation in Indonesia post-Soeharto was intended to fulfil the demand for political and economic reforms, therefore its implementation in the form of a regional autonomy scheme would likely be able to satisfy the full range of expectations of the reform movement supporters in the regions.

³ The *Pola dasar pembangunan daerah provinsi Riau tahun 2001-2005* (pp. 6 - 7) noted that based on the 2000 BKKBN survey, the number of households in Riau who lived under the official poverty line was 43.9% and the percentage of population who were 'poor', based on the 1999 SUSENAS, was 14% of a total of 4,733,948 people.

The implementation of decentralisation provided wider opportunities for the regions to exercise political and economic authority in accordance to local needs and conditions.

Although it was clearly stated in Law No. 22/1999 that the regions had the responsibilities or authority to make policies in conducting governmental activities and development programs, the centre still continued to make interventions. There was still a kind of *'tarik-ulur'* ('pull and release') between the central and local governments in exercising the authority (Interview with an official of Riau Development Planning Board, 16 June 2003). A Pekanbaru bureaucrat used the proverb *'dilepas kepalanya, dipegang ekornya'* ('let go of its head, but caught its tail') in his discussion with me as he described the transfer of authority from the centre to the region in the early stage of decentralisation (Interview, 30 June 2003) and a similar interpretation was given by a Bengkalis Village Secretary (Interview, 29 July 2003). This was described as occurring in areas such as the utilising of strategic natural resources, in which the central government intervened in the regions in managing and utilising such as timber and mining, as well as oil and gas. In this case, there were economic and political interests of the central government in these local natural resources indicated by the fact that the centre still produced regulations to utilise them. This gave an impression that the central government was not fully accepting of a complete delegation of its authority to the local governments. Accordingly, one of my respondents labelled the new scheme of decentralisation as *'otonomi setengah hati'* ('half-hearted autonomy') (Interview with a bureaucrat in Bengkalis, 28 July 2003).

Next, different perceptions of local government office-holders (both bureaucrats and politicians) of the concept of decentralisation, incapable government officials, as well as a 'bad mentality' of bureaucrats and politicians have been other obstacles faced by the Riau government in

implementing decentralisation (Interview with sixteen bureaucrats and politicians of Riau, June to October 2003). Even by the third year of decentralisation there was a variety of perceptions of the concept of decentralisation due to inadequate guidelines. For example, some district and city government officials believed that the city and district governments were not part of provincial government. They indicated this by their frequent absence from official meetings held by the governor (Interview with a provincial bureaucrat of Riau, 23 June 2003). The official visits of the governor to the districts were also not warmly welcomed, and the *bupati* ignored the role of the governor since the *bupati* could go directly to Jakarta (Interview with the head of a political party in Bengkalis, 28 July 2003). As a result, the governor only became a spectator in the process of development (Interview with a member of the Bengkalis DPRD, 23 July 2003).

According to the Provincial Secretary for Government, Public Relations and Law Affairs of Riau (Interview, 21 June 2003), until 2003 the Riau government still faced the problem of a low quality of many of its bureaucrats. Consequently, some key positions in the government offices were filled by incapable people, and some districts were not ready to carry out decentralisation. The low quality of government staff was indicated by a lack of experience in dealing with the governmental affairs (Interview with the Village Secretary of Bengkalis, 29 July 2003). A 'bad mentality' of bureaucrats was also considered to be hindering the success of decentralisation because it was resulting in the development programs not satisfying people's interests. In Bengkalis, for instance, the district government tended to use the budget for starting developing mega-project infrastructures, such as an international hospital and an international harbour. One of my respondents stated that such physical development was good for generating revenues, but that was not what the ordinary people wanted. People

preferred the government to pay attention to the development programs that directly generate people's welfare rather than the development of mega-project infrastructures (Interview with the head of a political party in Bengkalis, 28 July 2003).

One major issue in dealing with the decentralisation in Riau was the low quality of local government officials and the DPRD members. The incapability of government officials in performing their duties became an important issue in the province that was deeply considered as being the highest priority to overcome. Therefore, the provincial government planned to solve this problem by conducting training and extensions, as well as providing scholarships for further study (Interview with the Head of Riau Provincial Board for Information, Communication and National Unity Affairs, 18 June 2003). The scholarships were not only given to government bureaucrats but also to members of the public. The provincial government allocated 30% of its budget (*Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah*; APBD) for the development of human resources by providing scholarships for those who want to continue studying, either in Indonesia or abroad (Interview with the Riau Provincial Secretary for Government, Public Relations and Legal Affairs, 21 June 2003). Besides the provincial government, the district government of Bengkalis also provided scholarships for its officials to undertake further study, either for undergraduate or post-graduate programs (Interview with the District Secretary of Bengkalis, 1 August 2003). The city government of Pekanbaru, meanwhile, did not provide scholarships because of its inadequate budget (Conversation with a Superintendent of Pekanbaru, 11 September 2007).

Decentralisation has been an instrument to attempt to make development appropriate to the aspiration of local people. At provincial level, the Riau government targeted that by 2020 it must have achieved certain goals as stated in the Vision and Missions of the

province legalised through Provincial Regulation No. 36/2001 (see BPDE Provinsi Riau 2002, 7; *Pola dasar pembangunan daerah provinsi Riau* 2001, 26-27). The Vision of Riau is to develop the province by 2020 as a centre of economy and of Malay culture in an ethos that is religious, physically and morally prosperous in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the Missions of the Riau government in conducting development programs are: (i) making Riau society religious, healthy, smart, skilful and prosperous; (ii) turning Riau society into a democracy, just, obedient to the law, and respecting human rights; (iii) constructing a Riau society which practices Malay culture, and has mastered technology and science; (iv) utilising local natural resources optimally, sustainable, and in environmentally oriented ways; (v) constructing stable infrastructure facilities; (vi) developing trade-industrial and advanced services supported by agro-industry and agro-business; (vii) performing good and clean governance. The Riau government uses these Vision and Missions as guidelines to make policies in developing the province. From both the Vision and Mission it is clear that 'Malay culture' is a focus of Riau's development programs. Accordingly, the Riau government formulated and implemented various *Perda* (*Peraturan Daerah*; Provincial Regulations) about adopting Malay symbols and conceptions. The implementation of decentralisation has been accompanied by the revival of Malay cultural identity as discussed in the following section.

The *Putra Daerah* ('Native Sons'), Economic Benefits, and the Revival of Riau Cultural Identity

Decreasing the central state's power in Indonesia during the reform period had brought several consequences, one of which was an encouragement of people in the regions, including in Riau, to demand political, economic, and socio-cultural reforms. The demand for political reform in Riau was centred on and symbolised by the manifestation of the wish of Riau elites to place

a *putra daerah* (son/daughter of the region or member of indigenous ethnic groups)⁴ as governor of the province since the previous governors were always dropped in from Jakarta. The demand for economic reform was intended to get a larger proportion of revenue sharing from the local economic resources since during the New Order period these were transferred to Jakarta while a large proportion of local people remained in poverty. The demand for socio-cultural reform, meanwhile, was intended to preserve the Malay culture and tradition that had been almost sunk as a result of national cultural unification under the New Order government.

Since the New Order government had dominated the local political affairs of Riau by placing its people from Java as the provincial governors, the discourse on *putra daerah* was aroused. The notion of *putra daerah* indicated the creation of a border in the relationship between indigenous people and new-comers in this region. Although the meaning of *putra daerah* is a contested one, some of my Malay respondents defined the *putra daerah* of Riau as someone or people whose ancestors were members of native ethnic groups even if those people were born outside Riau (Interview with a paramilitary activist of Pekanbaru, 19 July 2003; Interview with a NGO activist of Bengkalis, 29 July 2003). Another definition of *putra daerah* refers to local instead of native or a particular ethnic group (Interview with the Provincial Secretary for Government, Public Relations and Legal Affairs of Riau, 21 June 2003).

Under both the 1999 and 2004 decentralisation laws, the central government reduced its role in local political affairs. The governors of Indonesia's provinces are no longer allocated from the centre, as the regions now have more freedom to decide their own governor based on local aspirations

through the regional election (*Pemilihan kepada daerah; Pilkada*) mechanism. Since the resignation of President Soeharto, Riau has held elections twice to choose its governors; in 1998 and 2003. In the ten years after the collapse of the New Order regime, Riau has had two governors from its *putra daerah*; Saleh Djasit (1998-2003) and Rusli Zainal (2003 to present).⁵ This is evidence that the political reform in Indonesia has provided a real change for local people to express freedom, which is an essential element of democracy.

Despite its essential role in the process of democracy, raising the notion of *putra daerah* in Riau has caused several consequences. Firstly, it has increased internal conflict within the districts due to political and economic interests. Examples include the case of Mandau and Meranti (Merbau, Rangsang, and Tebing Tinggi) sub-districts in Bengkalis district, as well as Rodas (Rokan Darussalam) sub-district in Rohul (Rokan Hulu) district, which want to form autonomous districts separating from their core districts. Yet, the aspiration of people in those sub-districts in demanding the upgrade of their sub-districts to be autonomous districts was initiated by the DPR (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*; House of Representative) in Jakarta. Secondly, it has increased regionalism and ethnocentrism. Some members of Riau elites have interpreted decentralisation as 'prioritising indigenous people.' Consequently, they insisted that all positions of head of a region (governor, mayor, *bupati*) be held by a *putra daerah*. During the 2003 provincial governor's election, for instance, Riau elite members involved in the FKPMR (*Forum Komunikasi Pemuka Masyarakat Riau*; Riau Community Leaders' Communication Forum) produced a recommendation that the governor of Riau, including his wife, must a person coming originally from the Malay ethnic group

⁴ The term '*putra daerah*' can refers to either singular or plural form, where in a certain context it is used to address 'the son/daughter of the region' while in another occasion it connotes to 'indigenous people.'

⁵ Rusli Zainal is Suko's son-in-law. Suko (Ismail Suko) was the symbol of Riau's resistance against Jakarta (the centre) during the New Order period.

(Interview with a lecturer of UNRI, 21 June 2003).

Next, under the 1999 decentralisation laws, the heads of regions (governor, mayors, and heads of districts) were responsible to the provincial, city and district DPRD respectively. The DPRD members (legislators) were powerful so were arrogant and ready to threaten to impeach the regional heads. To avoid being impeached, the heads of region often used money politics to satisfy the DPRD members. The money used to do this was taken from the government budget. As a result, the heads of region were busily paying more attention to the welfare of legislators than providing better services to the people (Interview with a lecturer of Riau, 21 June 2003). Finally, by the implementation of decentralisation, the cases of corruption have now spread out to the local governments instead of being concentrated in the central government. My respondents pointed out that regional autonomy had been used by the bureaucrats and politicians as '*aji mumpung*' ('a chance') to enrich themselves (Interview with a Riau lecturer who was also an NGO activist, 19 June 2003; Interview with the Deputy Head of the Pekanbaru DPRD, 11 July 2003).

The implementation of decentralisation in Riau has brought several consequences. The Riau government is concerned about the development of human resources. By the implementation of decentralisation, more funds in this province have been allotted to provide school fee exemption for primary to high school students. The Riau government has also been increasing the quality of human resources available in the province by providing scholarships for government staff, other civil servants, and members of the public (Conversations with three scholarship receivers, 1 to 15 August 2007). To improve the civil servants' welfare, more funds have been allotted to increase the salaries of civil servants in the local administration. The senior bureaucrats and the members of DPRD are

now paid more than ordinary civil servants (Interview with a provincial government staff, 1 September 2007).

The provincial government also uses its additional funds for generating people's welfare through its *k2i* (*kemiskinan, kebodohan, infrastruktur*) program, intended to alleviate poverty, eradicate ignorance, and develop infrastructure facilities. Importantly however, I was told by a civil servant in Pekanbaru that the funds given to the poor families are "only symbolic." Moreover, the provincial labelling of it as 'alleviating poverty' is actually misleading as it is actually spent on infrastructure, which is then claimed to be leading to 'alleviating poverty'. In eradicating ignorance, the provincial government provides scholarships for outstanding pupils and teachers to undertake further study. It also gives incentives to teachers who work in remote areas (Conversation with the School Superintendent of Pekanbaru, 12 September 2007).

In providing infrastructural facilities, the provincial government of Riau carries out a number of multiyear projects, such as the construction of roads (Sei Akar-Bagan Jaya, Bagan Jaya-Enok-Kuala Enok, etc.), the Teluk Mesjid and Perawang bridges, and a provincial library (named after the outstanding Riau-born poet Soeman H.S.). For the construction of the provincial library, according to the notice-board in front of it, the government allocated funds of Rp 151 billion (Personal observation, 11 September 2007). Besides developing infrastructural facilities, the provincial government cooperated with district governments in Riau and in three neighbouring provinces (i.e. Lampung, Bangka-Belitung, and Bengkulu) together with a private investor (Bhakti Investastama Group) to establish a local airline company, RAL (Riau Airlines).⁶

⁶ The Riau Airlines (RAL) was established in 2002, with 100% stake held by the provincial and city/district governments in Riau (including Riau Archipelago). It is the only airline company in Indonesia owned by regional government. The main purpose of establishing this company is to facilitate transportation course amongst

The above discussion only covers a few examples of what has been done by the provincial government of Riau as part of its implementation of decentralisation. It is true that decentralisation has benefited the general population of this province as various development programs have been carried out to generate people's welfare. Yet, the implementation of decentralisation gives great benefits to local elites, particularly bureaucrats and politicians, because they can make the decisions about their own salaries (Interview with a politician of Bengkalis, 23 July 2003). The university students, who were sacrificing their time and energy during the protests demanding decentralisation, did not promptly get significant rewards. After graduating from the university, however, some of them gained positions in the governmental offices (Conversation with an ex-student activist who is now a lecturer in Riau, 5 September 2007). The Riau government does not give *tunjangan kesejahteraan* (additional salary) to university lecturers either, though the lecturers⁷ had played a vital role in demanding the reform (Conversation with a lecturer of UIN SUSKA, 1 September 2007). Even though regional autonomy gives much of the decentralising transfer of authority and powers to the district/city level rather than the provincial, the provincial government of Riau also receives a far larger amount from revenue-sharing

compared with before the implementation of decentralisation.

At city/district level, the implementation of decentralisation in Riau has also brought about positive impacts on increasing development funds. The amount of funds obtainable depends on whether the region has economic resources that produces revenue. The resource-rich districts, such as Bengkalis that produces oil, receive more revenues than relatively poor-resource ones, such as Pekanbaru. Consequently, the district government of Bengkalis is able to carry out more development programs than that of Pekanbaru. Since the reformist version of decentralisation was firstly legalised thus could be pragmatically prepared for in 1999, Bengkalis has been able to develop an international hospital and an international harbour. The district government of Bengkalis has also been providing scholarships and school fee exemption for its people. During my visit to this district in 2003, I was told by an official that everyone wherever they are, as long as they can prove by birth or school certificate they have once lived in this district, was encouraged to apply for district government scholarships. The city government of Pekanbaru, meanwhile, focuses on the *k3* (*kebersihan, keindahan, ketertiban*; cleanness, beauty, and order) program for the city (Conversation with a political party staff of Pekanbaru, 11 September 2007).

Since the fall of the New Order government, shaping local identity has been occupying the central point in political discourse everywhere in Indonesia (see Faucher 2005, 127). This localism is interpreted differently among different regions (Suryadi 2005, 133). In Riau, the elites and intellectuals supported by university students, NGO activist, and journalists have constructed local identity by preserving and publicly expressing Malay culture, which is considered as identical with Islam as reflected in the local way of life: "*Adat bersendi syarak, Syarak bersendikan kitabullah*" ("Custom based on

districts/cities, and to support the acceleration of Riau's economic growth, in order to achieve Riau Vision 2020 introduced by Governor Saleh Djasit on the Guidelines of Riau Province Development. On April 2, 2004, this company invited other investors and the first General Assembly of Shareholders (RUPS) was held (see http://www.riau-airlines.com/about_us.php?id=1).

⁷ The lecturers are under the central government administration, and therefore do not get additional salary from the local government. Ironically, the income of primary and high school teachers and other civil servants can be twice of the lecturers. As illustration, the salary of a lecturer is approximately Rp 2.5 million per month with no additional salary from the local government. A civil servant with the same rank under the provincial government administration, meanwhile, gets a salary of around Rp 2 million plus an additional salary of Rp 2.7 million per month.

Islamic teaching, Islamic teaching based on Koran”) (Suwardi 2005, 38). A study by Ford (2003, 132-147) on who are the *orang Riau* (Riau people) reflected the rise of ethnic sentiment in this region after being long ruled by the New Order regime. Rab (2002b, 101) claimed that the indigenous culture of Riau was lost under this regime. The national television programs broadcasted by TVRI (Republic of Indonesia Television), for instance, were designed by the New Order government as media to develop and disseminate “the idea of a nation-state among the numerous ethnic groups in this multiethnic country” (Suryadi 2005, 134).⁸ The post-New Order implementation of decentralisation has opened the gate for indigenous people of Riau to re-conceive their traditional culture. This is related to Erb’s statement (2007, 248) that the implementation in 2001 of decentralisation based on the 1999 laws has significantly influenced the institutional revival of *adat* (custom) in Indonesia.

Following the fall of the New Order regime, there was a *kebangkitan ke-Melayu-an* (revival of Malayness) or ‘ethno-nationalism’ and ‘atavism’ in Riau (Wee 2002).⁹ Al Azhar and Prof. Dr. Tabrani Rab are among the Riau scholars who are concerned with the preservation of Malay culture and traditions. They had already founded the Riau Cultural Institute in 1978 almost exactly in the middle of the New Order era.¹⁰ This organisation provided teaching and published books on Riau Malay culture and literature. Likewise, the

pemuka adat (customary figures) of this province organised themselves in the LAMR (*Lembaga Adat Melayu Riau*; Riau Malay Customary Institution) which has been actively promoting Malay norms and values to the society, such as by writing books and articles, as well as conducting seminars and cultural displays.

As an example of attempted Malay revivalism, in the early stage of the reform period there were debates and campaigns on using the old Malay words *Encik* and *Puan* (rather than the standard Indonesian *Bapak* and *Ibu*) to address an older man and woman respectively. Nevertheless, during my visit to Riau in 2007 these words were not apparently being commonly used in the public sphere. When I conducted an interview with one member of the Riau elites (26 January 2007), he refused to be addressed *Encik* and preferred to be called *Bapak* instead. Yet, during the Riau DPRD session in the *Lancang Kuning* building¹¹ on 24 August 2007, broadcast by the Pekanbaru RRI (Radio of the Republic of Indonesia), besides using *Bapak* and *Ibu*, the speakers also used *Encik*, *Puan*, and *Tuan* to address the audiences (the DPRD members).

The revival of atavism and cultural identity in Riau is also indicated by the emergence of paramilitary groups, whose names used the words ‘*Melayu*’ and/or ‘*Riau*,’ such as the BMMR (*Barisan Muda Melayu Riau*; Riau Young Malay Front), LMBR (*Laskar Melayu Bersatu Riau*; United Malay Troops of Riau), LHM (*Laskar Hulubalang Melayu*; Malay Traditional Troops), *Ikatan Pemuda Anak Negeri* (Indigenous Youth Union), and *Banteng Riau* (Wild-Oxen of Riau).¹² During my visit to the headquarters office of the BMMR in 2003, for instance, there was a notice: “*Kawasan*

⁸ Although Malay culture was less developed under the New Order regime such that it caused Riau people to feel culturally marginalised, it was not necessarily ignored by the government. Under Governor Imam Munandar, for instance, there was a Congress on Malay culture in Riau held from 17 to 21 July 1985 (see Budisantosa *et al.* 1986).

⁹ For further discussion on ‘ethno-nationalism’ see Connor, Walker 1994.

¹⁰ Al Azhar is currently the Director of the Centre for Malay Studies at the Islamic University of Riau (UIR), the Director of the Riau Cultural Institute, and the Chairman of the FKPMR (Communication Forum for Riau Community Leaders).

¹¹ The new building of the Riau DPRD is named after the legendary flagship during the Malay sultanate, *Lancang Kuning*.

¹² The name of ‘*Banteng Riau*’ corresponds to that of the Banteng Council, the Army division in Central Sumatra during the 1950s under which the PRRI rebellion was carried out.

wajib berbahasa Melayu” (“Compulsory Malay speaking area”), clearly implying that this organisation was intended to preserve Malay culture and tradition. However, according to a public assertion by the *Datuk Panglima Besar*¹³ (‘Commander-in-Chief’) of the LMBR, Syarwan Hamid,¹⁴ those paramilitary groups did not propose to develop a narrow-minded ethnic sentiment. They just aimed to elevate Malay dignity in Riau since the Malay community had been continuously ignored during the 60 years of independence (*Kompas*, 8 March 2004).

The intention to preserve ‘Malay culture’ appears to have been a concocted reason. According to a member of a Riau elite based in Jakarta, Alfitra Salamm (Interview, 26 January 2008), the paramilitary groups mushrooming in Riau during the reform period were intended to obtain personal profit as people involved in them were generally jobless and opportunists. During my visit to Riau in 2003, I noticed members of a number of paramilitary groups with their striped uniforms coming flocking into the provincial government office asking for funds by submitting proposals to support their unclear activities as they knew that the local government had plenty of money as a consequence of decentralisation. One of my respondents (Interview with a Riau intellectual based in Jakarta, 26 January 2008) stated that the issue of preserving Malay culture had been used as a cover by certain groups of Riau people to get financial benefits. During my visit in 2007, however, those reportedly self-interested paramilitary groups had already disappeared.

In the governmental sphere, the revival of a ‘Malayness’ was manifested by the establishment of various regulations that referred to Malay culture and traditions, such as about dress codes, the architecture of

government offices, and the use of *Jawi* scripts (Malay Arabic lettering). As discussed in Chapter 6, ‘preserving Malay culture’ was one of the reform agendas in Riau. From the early stage of decentralisation the provincial government of Riau made it compulsory for school students and civil servants all over the province to dress according to a Malay dress code every Friday and on important occasions; *baju kurung cekak musang* or *teluk belanga* for men, and *baju kurung labuh/pendek* or *baju kurung labuh belah dada/kebaya* for women.¹⁵ The provincial government of Riau has also made and implemented a Local Regulation (*Perda*) about the architecture of government offices, with the roof of every government and public building having to be constructed using the *selembayung* model.¹⁶ In 2004, the Riau governor’s and other government offices, including the bus station, were renovated following this architectural requirement. To strengthen Riau-Malay cultural identity, as mentioned previously, the Riau government is now developing a six-storey provincial library named after a Riau poet, Soeman H.S., located next to the governor’s office, with an architecture resembling the *rehal* (a lectern the Koran is placed on). This library, whose development cost Rp 151 billion, was intended to give the impression that the Riau community or Malay culture is identical with Islam. The use of the Malay-Arabic *Jawi* script on public boards is also regulated by the *Perda* at the city/district level of government. Today, this lettering is used all over the province for street names and information boards in public areas. Reading and writing *Jawi* is also a part of the school curriculum.

¹³ This term was adopted from one of the noble positions (the Sultan’s assistant) used in the Malay sultanate period.

¹⁴ Syarwan Hamid is a Riau-born, retired Army General who had been the former Minister of Home Affairs under President Habibie.

¹⁵ These terms refer to the clothing models, which no English translation.

¹⁶ *Selembayung* (also called *sulo bayung* or *tanduk buang*) is the ornament/model of architecture used in the top of the roof on the front part of a house or building. A *Selembayung* placed on the highest part of the building is called a *tajuk rumah* (crown of the house), and is believed as a source of elegance for the building (Budisantoso *et al.* 1986, 437-440).

Finally, there are several claims that can be made regarding the implementation of decentralisation in Riau. Three out of the five provincial government bureaucrats and politicians whom I interviewed in 2003 stated that decentralisation should be implemented at provincial level to ease coordination in delivering development programs thereby avoiding conflicts of interests among district/city authorities. On the other hand, nine out of eleven government bureaucrats and politicians at the district, city, and lower levels whom I interviewed supported the implementation of decentralisation at the district/city level to increase the public services and people's welfare because of the reasoning that this level of government is closer to the people (grassroots). In regards to the implementation of decentralisation, my respondents from the civil society category responded that common people (members of the lower levels of society) did not care whether the policy was for the decentralisation being at the level of provinces or of local districts since the most important point was the welfare of the people (Interviews with five journalists and seven NGO activists of Pekanbaru and Bengkalis in 5 June to 27 July 2003; Interview with a community leader of Bengkalis, 30 July 2003). By 2008 members of Riau elites, including bureaucrats, politicians, and prominent figures, were demanding the central government give *otonomi khusus* (special autonomy) to Riau such as has been implemented in Aceh and Papua. By the implementation of special autonomy, the Riau elites expect that more funds will remain in this province for generating people's welfare. The provincial DPRD of Riau has also asked the people to support the struggle for this demand (Interview with a Riau elite member based in Jakarta, 26 January 2008).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article has discussed the implementation of decentralisation in Riau and its consequences on the revival of localism,

the economic benefit, as well as the revival of cultural identity. It has also explored Riau people's experiences of national integration under decentralisation using Drake's concept and subjective experiences. Drake (1989) categorised Indonesia's provinces into four groups based on their level of development and integration. Riau was considered as being the most economically developed and highly integrated province besides East Kalimantan, North and South Sumatra, and North Sulawesi. Nevertheless, some people of Riau felt that their economic resources were exploited by the Javanese-dominated government under the authoritarian New Order regime. When Soeharto's government was pushed over in 1998, thousands of Riau students, NGO activists, intellectuals, customary and community leaders, together with bureaucrats and politicians demanded the central government speed up the implementation of decentralisation or accept Riau's independence, if decentralisation was not quickly implemented. In response the Indonesian government implemented decentralisation. This implies that a main aim of decentralisation during the reform era was to prevent national disintegration.

This article suggests that even though it does not directly affect all of Drake's variables, the implementation of decentralisation during the post-Soeharto era has been able to preserve national integration in Riau. By the implementation of Law No. 22/1999 on Regional Government, the indigenous people of Riau have been given wider chances to be the leaders for their own region. The implementation of Law No. 25/1999 on the Fiscal Balance between the Central and Regional Governments resulted in an increase in the revenues received by the provincial and local government. Riau now receives a far larger share of revenues so that more public facilities and services can be provided. Hence the implementation of decentralisation in Riau has reduced political and economic gaps between the centre and this province.

Subsequently, it has reduced tensions and resistance against the centre and reduced the risk of national disintegration. Although decentralisation has seen the rise of some ethnocentrism, atavism, and regionalism, it has not appeared to have weakened national integration.

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