

Identity-Based Administrative Involution in Indonesia: How Political Actors and Community Figures Do It?

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Submission date: 16-Apr-2023 01:49AM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 2065378479

File name: Scopus_Q1_an_Erond,_Identity-Based_administrative_involution.pdf (469.84K)

Word count: 10921

Character count: 62196

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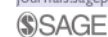
SAGE Open

October-December 2020: 1–13

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DOI: 10.1177/2158244020974015

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Abstract

The article aims to explore and discuss administrative involution in the context of the establishment of autonomous regions in Indonesia. The problem focuses on the role of actors to consolidate identities as a strategy of cleavage and the emergence of provinces. The study compares four cases of provincial cleavage in Sumatra, where two provinces have been formed, Bangka Belitung and Riau Islands, as well as two pending provinces of Tapanuli and Nias Islands. Data were collected through in-depth, personal interviews and self-report measures. The study refers to the constructive identity paradigm. Administrative involution, the findings of this study, is a product of ethnic politics that consolidates identity, determines the main political actors and categories, and changes its particular characteristics into a significant predictor of self-esteem for power-sharing. Administrative involution, the conclusion of the study, is an actor's game of dividing the province, the power-sharing mechanism.

Keywords

administrative, cleavages, consolidation, identity, involution

Introduction

This study is motivated by the phenomenon of ethnic identity consolidation during reforms in the formation of autonomous provinces. During the 20 years of the Reform era (1999–2019), the number of autonomous provinces increased from 27 to 34. An exception was the referendum in 1999 when East Timor separated from Indonesia. In the same year, three new provinces were formed: North Maluku, East Irian Jaya, and Central Irian Jaya. Furthermore, in 2000, the number of provinces increased to 32 after the formation of Babel, Gorontalo, and Banten provinces. Furthermore, in 2001, East and Central Papua merged to become Papua Province. The number of provinces became 33 after the formation of Riau Islands in 2002 and West Sulawesi in 2004. The 34th province is North Borneo, formed in 2012. The number of provinces is confirmed to increase in line with the plan to form eight new autonomous provinces: Tapanuli and Nias Islands in North Sumatra, Kapuas Raya in West Borneo, Bolangmangondow in North Celebes, Sumbawa Island in West Nusa Tenggara, as well as Southwest Papua, South Papua, and Central Papua in Papua.

In addition to 8 proposals for autonomous provinces, there are 57 ongoing proposals for the formation of regencies and cities. The 2014 moratorium delayed the formation of new autonomous regions. However, in 2019, during President

Jokowi's second period, the formation of autonomous regions became possible during the two decades of the reform era (1999–2019), 215 new autonomous regions have been formed, consisting of 7 provinces, 173 regencies, and 35 cities. Until 2019 when the study was conducted, the nation-state had 524 autonomous regions, consisting of 34 provinces, 98 cities, and 398 regencies.

This study focuses on the cleavage and formation of four autonomous provinces on the island of Sumatra. In both cases, the cleavage and formation of provinces are seen as administrative involution, dwarfing and creating new political arenas. Administrative involution is a pragmatic step in understanding the social world that demands power-sharing, which has implications for the formation of political structures, governance, and budget allocations. Administrative involution is an actor's game to expand the political arena and assert their ambition. The actors are individuals, leaders and cadres of parties, bureaucrats, entrepreneurs, and leaders of social institutions (Bayu, 2018). Actors collaborate with

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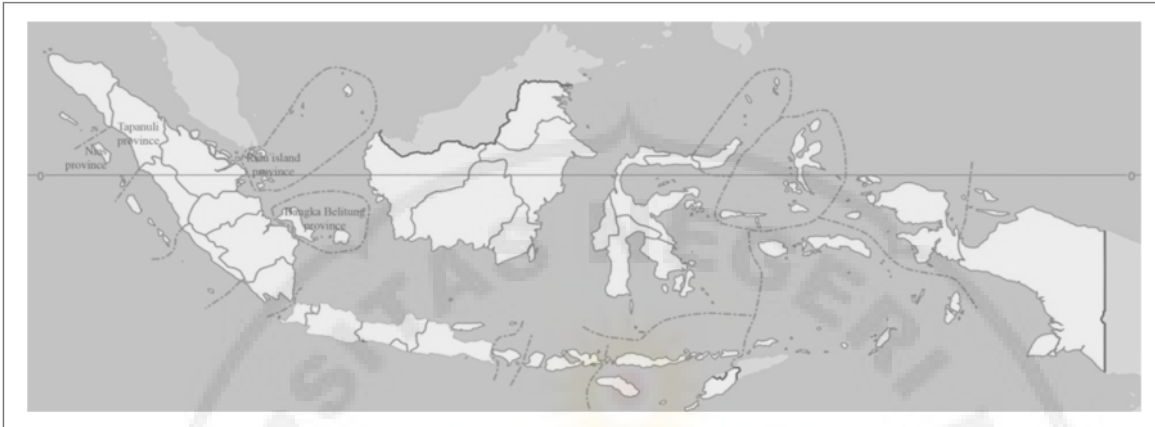


Figure 1. Map of Indonesia and research locations.
Source: Southeast Asia.SVG.

officials in the regions as well as political figures in Jakarta to facilitate the formation of provinces. Actors have hidden goals of creating political opportunities and access to economic resources and power. Administrative involution, thus, is the systematic organization of identities to expand the political arena to smaller autonomous regions.

The formation of new autonomous regions allows a transition from centralism to decentralization as part of democratization. However, decentralization is implemented through regional autonomy, giving rise to five trends: (a) the birth of “little kings”; (b) cleavage and formation of autonomous regions; (c) the emergence of the concept “local sons” in general elections; (d) the phenomenon of the existence of a single candidate in the executive election, and (e) identity politicization (Damanik, 2020a; Nordholt & van Klinken, 2007). The determination of cleavage and the formation of provinces emphasize the consolidation of identities to touch ethnic spirituality. The identity contains references, sources of motivation, and symbolic construction to understand the social world. However, concerning administrative involution, identity consolidation is intended more as a strategy and tactic of mobilizing grassroots.

The article is focused on four provinces, two of which have been formed, Bangka Belitung (Babel) and the Riau Islands (Kepri), as well as two provinces that are still pending, Tapanuli (Protap) and Nias. Although still pending, the proposal for the formation of the Protap and Nias only needs legislative approval in Jakarta. The four provinces have five characteristics: (a) three provinces represent an archipelago and one mainland, (b) Babel and Kepri tend to be multiethnic, whereas Protap and Nias tend to be homogeneous, (c) identity as determination: Babel and Kepri take advantage of identity sentiments, in which mainland Malay (more advanced) and Island Malay or Straits (backward), as well as their origins; ethnic hosts (Malays) and immigrants (Javanese and Chinese;

Nuraini, 2007), (d) Protap takes advantage of religious, descendant, and clan sentiments, while Nias takes advantage of village sentiment, religion, and island isolation (Damanik, 2018, 2019a), and (e) elitist agenda. Figure 1 depicts four study locations on the island of Sumatra.

This study is built on six basic assumptions: (a) identity is a personal reference, a source of motivation, and social symbol construction to understand the social world, (b) identity is considered to represent a particular characteristic, which is a differentiator from other communities, (c) identity contains collective awareness, loyalty, and attachment, (d) actors consolidate identity as interest groups to demand power-sharing, (e) new provinces are new arenas for political actors, and (f) administrative involution is a political actor’s game.

Theoretical Framework

Administrative involution is the reality of consolidating identities during decentralization. Involution, to borrow C. Geertz’s (1963a) term, is the opposite of evolution in describing the decline of agriculture in Java. Involution is seen as an administrative setback, dwarfing autonomous regions with the intention of power-sharing. The parent region is considered to be uncaring toward grassroots welfare, is discriminatory, and creates development gaps. Accelerated development of parent regions, from the actor’s perspective, must be dwarfed. According to the actor, power-sharing requires grassroots approval by consolidating identity (Haboddin, 2012).

Identity is the basis of ethnic politics, a movement rooted in history and culture. Consolidation is the organizing of identity as a major political category demanding power-sharing (Heller & Rickmann, 1996), or the determination of who is accepted or rejected (Morowitz, 1998). Identity is biopolitics that constructs a grand narrative to accept or

reject **6**ers. Identity is seen as a personal reference, a source of motivation, and a symbol construction to understand **the social world** (Hale, 2004; Sanders, 2002). Identity is a tool to mobilize grassroots according to social situations (Hale, 2008). Identity is the categorization and identification of managing individual interactions in society (Barth, 1969). Identity consolidation is a projection of strategic stability (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963, 1975; McKay, 1982), to contest in a pluralistic society. Identity does not stop at primordial attributes, instead directed at particular characteristics, emphasizing social boundaries.

Actors consolidate identities into political movements to pave the way for their political ambitions. Less divisible power, access to limited economic and political resources, self-exclusion, and separation are seen as solutions (von Beyme, 1995). Identity consolidation is a game by actors who construct social boundaries according to ethnic situations (Barth, 1969; van den Berghe, 1970), and is projected to become an interest group in service to political expectations (Royce, 1982; Yinger, 1985).

Administrative involution is an actor's game according to strategic stability that demands power-sharing. More specifically, consolidation is the political discourse between "us" who want power, and "those" who relinquish power (Chandakirana, 1989). Consolidation correlates with the cultural system, values, and beliefs of local communities (Fikri & Oktario, 2018). Identity represents social institutions, including ethnicity, culture, religion, economy, and politics as well as the embryo of differentiation (Sukamto, 2010). Consolidation is not just emphasizing distinguishing symbols, signs, or attributes, rather also directed as a significant predictor of group esteem (Alba, 1985; Castells, 2009; Fukuyama, 2004). Consolidation is carried out by tracing historical, cultural, and social bases (Naroll, 1964). The consolidation of identity is thus closely related to political interests.

In Indonesia, the 1999 reform was marked by a change in the state administration from centralism to decentralization. In practice, although not yet final, decentralization became the answer to demands for regional autonomy. The implementation of autonomy gave birth to two new political phenomena: (a) the proliferation of identity politics, and (b) the cleavage and formation of autonomous regions over their parent regions (Nordholt & van Klinken, 2007). The reform euphoria has become a momentum for demanding state recognition of identity. For the record, compared with the New Order, identity consolidation was stronger during the reform era. During the New Order, identities were locked tight. Discussing identity was considered subversive. Identity becomes a "Pandora's Box" not to be discussed even though it has always been studied in school or college. However, in the reform era, identity is not just a hot topic but has become a political tool, strategy, and tactic: (a) executive elections (governors, regents, and mayors), (b) legislative elections, (c) presidential elections, and (d) formation of autonomous regions.

Indonesia, to borrow the terms Boeke (1953) and Furnivall (1939), reflects plural societies characterized by a diversity of ethnicities, religions, languages, dialects, genealogy, historical origins, and cultural attributes. There are 360 language groups (Bruner, 1974; Jaspan, 1958), and 713 ethnic groups in Indonesia. On one hand, pluralism positions Indonesia as the most heterogeneous country in the world (H. Geertz, 1976), but on the other hand, the nation-state has the potential to generate primordial sentiments (C. Geertz, 1963b). Plurality demands a balance of identity in government structures (Rex, 1959; Rex & Singh, 2003). Every ethnic group wants recognition of its identity, both in government structures and in autonomous regions.

Administrative involution is a consequence of consolidating identity during regional autonomy. Each group wants the province to represent their identity. Before the reform era, provinces in Indonesia reflected the amalgamation of two or three groups. North Sumatra, for example, is a province consisting of eight groups: Malay, Minangkabau, Toba, Simalungun, Angkola, Pakpak, Nias, and Karo. On the island of Java, the Betawi, Sundanese, and Javanese each have their province. In South Sulawesi, the Bugis, Buton, Makassar, and Mandar are collectives of a single province. Post-reformation, North Sumatra was cleaved into Protap and Nias, South Sumatra into Babel, and Riau into Kepri. Afterward, South Celebes was cleaved into West Celebes. Except for Madura, each group in Java; Betawi, Sundanese, and Javanese have their provinces, even Betawi and Javanese each have two provinces.

Province cleavage makes use of constructive identity. Although they may have similar identities such as language and religion, ethnic boundaries are built on their specific attributes. Consolidation shifts from a particular characteristic to a social boundary. Identity is not seen as static, but rather melting and even manipulative. Identity is packaged according to social, political, and economic situations. Consolidation greatly depends on advantages and returns expectations, material and immaterial resources. Consolidation is a mechanism for actors to trick the grassroots for political support. The game involves actors: politicians, officials, businessmen, state civil servants, political party leaders, and leaders of social institutions, collaborating with politicians in Jakarta for their agenda. Administrative involution, thus, is a mechanism for expanding the arena that advantages actors more than the grassroots.

Method

7 The study was carried out qualitatively with a pragmatic methodological approach (Creswell, 2007), according to the perspective of political anthropology (Banks, 1996). The pragmatic approach views social reality, single and multiple administrative involutions, which believes that knowledge is either objective or subjective, biased, or directed. The research question determines the choice of rhetoric and methodology

because validity exists in all approaches (Creswell & Plano, 2011). In this study, the pragmatic approach is considered ideal because it is compatible with mixed methods designs (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Then, a variety of perspectives is seen as providing the best information about the problem being studied (Greene & Hall, 2010), and useful when single information from one source is insufficient (Creswell & Plano, 2011). The perspective of political anthropology in this study is focused on the grassroots understanding of identity and the formation of provinces.

The study involved 28 informants, consisting of 20 men and 8 women. A total of 15 informants, aged 45 to 70 years and the rest aged 35 to 44 years, were selected from four research locations. Selection and determination of informants are based on four considerations: (a) active participation in the formation of provinces, (b) roles and functions (drafter, negotiator, coordinator, and propagandist), (c) social relations between politicians, bureaucrats, community figures, leaders of social institutions, entrepreneurs, and elites in Jakarta, and (d) the main agenda for cleavage and formation of provinces. All four considerations boil down to determining which informants had sufficient knowledge of the initial ideas, processes, mechanisms, urgency, as well as the significance of the formation of a new province. Informants were recruited from the provincial capital using purposeful criterion-based strategic sampling which included maximum variation, based on ethnicity, and snowball techniques to document patterns and variations (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Plano, 2011). Twenty-eight informants consisted of (a) political actors, (b) bureaucrats, (c) regional heads, (d) regional legislature members, (e) party leaders, and (f) community figures: religious leaders, heads of ethnic associations, traditional leaders, and youth leaders. As many as 21 informants were individuals and social institutions who actively participated, whereas the rest were completely unrelated to the cleavage and formation of the province.

The study focuses on the strategies and tactics of actors to consolidate identities to form provinces. Identity is evaluated following the multigroup ethnic identity measure mechanism: affirmation and belonging, ethnic behavior, and identity achievement (Phinney, 1992; Phinney et al., 1997). Informants are motivated to speak freely and convey their knowledge regarding the formation of provinces. For example, what do you know about identity? What do you know about the motivations for cleavage and formation of provinces? What would your perception be if the consolidation of identity was mainly correlated with the formation of provinces? What do you think about the urgency and significance of forming a province? Please describe your participation in supporting the cleavage and formation of provinces.

Interview results were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically. After the initial reading, the raw information is reduced by coding data according to its relevance with the intention behind the study. Data are combined in broader categories and themes, reflecting descriptive analysis,

classification, and interpretation (Creswell, 2007). In the final session, validation was carried out using a triangulation strategy, member checking, rich descriptions (Creswell, 2007), and saturation (Merriam, 2009). All data are read and confirmed through focus group discussions to ensure that all information is under social reality (Patton, 2002).

Finding and Discussion

Determinants of Cleavage and Formation of Four Provinces

The following descriptions detail the consolidation of identity, the main basis for cleavage, and the formation of four new provinces on the island of Sumatra. First, the cleavage and formation of the Babel out of South Sumatra. Babel is located at 1°50'–3°10' South Latitude and 105°–108° East Longitude, consisting of one city and six regencies: Pangkalpinang City (provincial capital), Bangka Regency, Belitung, West Bangka, Central Bangka, East Bangka, and South Bangka. It consists of 470 islands, the 2 largest islands of which are Bangka and Belitung. The total population based on the 2015 Population Census is 1,224,307. Based on religion, Muslims are the majority (88.71%), followed by Buddhists (4.49%), Protestants (3.37%), Catholics (1.31%), Confucians (3.30%), traditional religion (0.11%), and Hindus (0.01%).

The populations of Babel identified themselves as Malays. However, more than 40% of the population is Chinese and Javanese, migrants from the colonial period whose livelihood was in processing. Compared with the Malays and Javanese, the Chinese occupy the highest social strata, controlling the local economy and trade. In the economic structure, 20.40% of it is supported by the primary sector, agriculture, mining, and quarrying, 5.87% by the secondary sector and manufacturing industry, and 34.81% by the tertiary sector, services, and trade.

The main motivations for the formation of Babel are as follows: (a) reducing the dominance of Malay Mainlanders (*Melayu Daratan*) over Islanders (*Melayu Pulau*) in the political, economic, and social arenas, (b) the relative span of control and managerial to Palembang, the capital city of South Sumatra province, and (c) the marginalization of development in the archipelago compared with the mainland. The determinant of the cleavage and formation of Babel was the exclusion of the *Melayu Pulau* identity, perceived as underdeveloped and stupid. Substantively, the formation of Babel was an attempt to separate the identity of Islander (*Orang Pulau*) from the Mainlander (*Orang Darat*). *Melayu Pulau* or *Orang Pulau* is a label that Land Malays attach to the entire population of the island, although not all of them are Malay. The concept of *Melayu Pulau* is a label, a pejorative that emphasizes backwardness, ignorance, filth, slums, and poverty. On the island, there are Chinese, Javanese, Minangkabau, and Bugis.

Geographically, the mainland and the islands are separated by the Malacca Strait. From a development aspect, the island is lagging behind the mainland. The island tends to be poorer, dirtier, and shabbier than the mainland. The allocation of development is focused on the mainland. Mainland political actors dominate the political arena on the island. Mobility between the islands is relatively difficult because it is limited by waters surrounding each island. The government bureaucracy, party leaders, state civil servants, and heads of government tend to come from the mainland. The island became the place to dump officials, military, police, judges, prosecutors, and civil servants who are considered negligent or who oppose their superiors. The island, thus, is a reflection of isolation, marginalization, and poverty.

In line with the regional autonomy in 1999, political actors collaborated with community figures, state civil servants, businessmen, and leaders of social institutions to initiate the cleavage of the South Sumatra province. The figure of Yusril Ihza Mahendra, a legal expert and minister for three periods who came from Belitung, played an active role in cleaving and forming the Babel in 1999 to 2000. The initiators realized that the position of Yusril Ihza Mahendra had a great opportunity to lobby Jakarta (the Parliament and President). In 2000, the province of South Sumatra was cleaved into a new Babel province, with Belitung as its capital.

The essence of the role of actors in the cleavage of South Sumatra Province and forming Babel are as follows: (a) political actors organize community figures: chairman of the association of ethnic, religious, youth, women, party leaders, state civil servants, and society in three discussions regarding the plan to form Babel; (b) the actor initiated and funded two seminars and recommended the urgency and significance of the formation of Babel; (c) actors have an audience with the Governor of South Sumatra, conveying the desire of grassroots to form Babel; (d) actors form the structure of the provincial formation committee: protectors, advisors, chairpersons, general secretary, general treasurers, and committees, which consist of community elites; (e) assignment of academics financed by the Regional Budget (*Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah [APBD]*) of South Sumatra Province, a comprehensive study and feasibility as a province; (f) the results of the study were submitted in two seminars, attended by governors, regents, members of the legislature and initiators; (g) the recommendation of the seminar, the formation of Babel signed by the governor to be submitted to the Minister of Home Affairs and the legislature; (h) Yusril Ihza Mahendra, a politician and bureaucrat in Jakarta, lobbied the Minister of Home Affairs, the Minister of Law and Legislation, the Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security, and the legislature; (i) the legislature reviews the feasibility and readiness of Babel to become a province; and (j) the legislative plenary decided that Babel would become a single province.

Identities have been strengthened and expanded during the discourse on the cleavage of South Sumatra Province.

The construction of identity is not only immersed in cultural and religious attributes but also extended to social and economic attributes. The pejorative and marginal labels were affixed by *Melayu Daratan* to the *Melayu Pulau* and then used by actors as collective energy to influence grassroots. Island Malays construct themselves as natives, the origin of the mainland; the island civilization is said to be older than the mainland; the cultural attributes of the island are said to be more original Malay; the island is called the base of international shipping, the origin of trade; Islam is said to have originated from the island and spread to the mainland; the population of the island is more diverse than that of the mainland due to the migration of traders since the opening of the Tin Mine during the colonial era; the island's natural resource wealth is dredged to develop land; marginalization of the island is related to cause and effect, the dominance of politicians, bureaucrats, and state civil servants; and poverty is the indifferent consequence of politicians and governments who underestimate the island.

Mainstreaming identity is needed by actors to gain grassroots acceptance and support. During the initial momentum, informal discussions in the politicians' workroom extended to the grassroots. The exclusion of identities, the pejorative label, and the negative stigma of the island is further accepted and constructed. The actors choose identity exclusion over economic development as a determinant of formation. Identity is considered to touch grassroots because it is attached to itself. The exclusion of identity is the subject of discussion in coffee shops, markets, offices, mosques, monasteries, churches, even at informal meetings between 5 and 10 community members. In the first semester of 2000, the plan to create the Babel became a topic of heated discussion at the grassroots level. Actors felt that they had succeeded in influencing grassroots and expressed their support for the formation of Babel. Finally, on December 4, 2000, Abdurrahman Wahid, the President of Indonesia, signed Law Number 27 of 2000 concerning the Establishment of the Babel.

Second, the cleavage and formation of the Kepri out of Riau. Kepri consist of two cities and five regencies: Tanjungpinang and Batam City, Bintan Regency, Karimun, Natuna, Anambas, and Lingga. Administrative boundaries adjacent to other countries include Vietnam and Cambodia to the north, Malaya and West Borneo to the east, the provinces of Babel and Jambi to the south, and Singapore, Malaysia, and Riau to the west. Kepri consist of 2,408 islands, 30% among which are unnamed and uninhabited. The total area reaches 8,201.72 km², of which 25% is island, while the rest are either saltwater or freshwater. The main economic structures are transportation and communication (8.51%), processing industry (7.41%), finance and leasing (6.89%), services (6.77%), and trade, restaurants, and hotels (6.69%).

The population of the Kepri, according to data from the is 1,817,604. Batam and Tanjungpinang are the most densely populated cities. Based on religion, Muslims are the majority

(77.34%), followed by Protestants (12.28%), Buddhists (7.66%), Catholics (2.46%), Confucians (0.19%), and Hindus (0.07%). Based on ethnicity, Malay is dominant among Javanese, Chinese, Bugis, *Orang Laut*, Minangkabau, and Batak. Batam is an industrial city with the largest concentration of migrants. Strait people (*Orang Selat*) are the Malay's conception of the population in the island, with pejorative meaning, underdevelopment, and poor.

The main motivation is to cleave and form Kepri; (a) upholding the historical basis of the colonial period, (b) reducing the domination of mainland Malay in the island, (c) establishing the identity of *Orang Selat*, and (d) reducing the development gap on the island. For the record, during the period of Dutch colonialism, Kepri was called *Riau and Kepulauan (Riouw en Onderhoorigen)* in 1856 (National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia, 1970; Ricklefs, 2001). The historical basis was used to petition for the cleavage and formation of the Kepri. Juridical reasons allowed the formation of the Kepri, but the collective energy is identity. The island has barely been touched for 30 years since the national independence. However, since 1973, the islands, especially Batam, have been molded into industrial authorities and centers. B.J. Habibie, an alumnus of Aachen University, Germany, was entrusted as the Chairman of the Batam Authority.

Gradually, Batam and several islands, Bintan, Karimun, and Tanjungpinang, have progressed into developed areas on the island. In 2020, there are 17 types of industry and 1,309 companies in the archipelago, dominated by 211 types of machinery and metal industries. The entire industry is foreign and domestic capital participation, which absorbs 169,265 of both Indonesian and international workers. Batam has become a destination for migrants looking for work and establishing businesses. Archipelagic and international relations, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, are connected by sea and air. Thousands of island populations prefer to travel to neighboring countries over to Sumatra. The Batam Authority is a determinant of territorial progress and has made the islands more advanced than the mainland.

The population of Riau, both on the mainland and in the island, is predominantly Malay and Moslem. However, Strait people, the mainland population of islands, are the inhabitants of hundreds of islands in the Straits of Malacca and the Singapore Peninsula. From the perspective of *Melayu Darat*, Strait people are marginal and underdeveloped. Their Malayness is often questioned, and they become synonymous with being unhygienic, having many children, and poor. The pejorative label and stigma are relevant to the general characteristics of Indonesia's island population, namely, poor and underdeveloped. The development on the islands is relatively left behind compared with that on the mainland. However, since 1973, the islands have become more advanced than the mainland.

The actors see the rapid development of the island as a new political arena. Foreign and domestic investment

became political resources to form new provinces. The province is seen as an arena for widening political chances and opportunities. For actors, the determinant of identity shifted from exclusion according to the perspective of *Melayu Darat*, referring to historical bases and recent achievements in the island: (a) accepting the pejorative label *Orang Selat* according to the mainland Malay, (b) idolizing Hang Nadim, Hang Jebat, and Hang Tuah, an imaginative figure, a local Malay hero, conqueror of Malaysia, Singapore, and Southern Thailand, originating from the strait, as a social mascot, (c) *Orang Selat* civilization is older than the mainland Malay, (d) *Orang Selat* is a Malay embryo spreading to the Riau mainland, (e) all *Melayu Darat* originated from the Strait, (f) the Strait (Malacca) became the origin of the Riau Islamic Sultanate on land, and (g) the folklores and cultural attributes of *Melayu Darat* originated from the strait. In the Kepri, in comparison with the theme of development, identity facilitates the demands for new autonomous regions.

The difference between the phonetics of *Melayu Darat* and *Orang Selat* is not significant. Language and dialect are relatively the same; cultural attributes, ceremonies, rituals, arts, colors, and traditional clothes, are relatively the same. The battle for identity, the Straits, and Land Malays, emphasizes genealogy and Islam. From the perspective of *Orang Selat*, *Melayu Darat* had originated from the Strait. Islam first spread on the island, as a result of the encounter with Arab traders, and subsequently spread to the mainland. However, Dutch colonialism changed all these assumptions, preferring Bengkalis on the mainland as the capital and seat of *Karasidenan Riau* (Riau Residency).

The actors who came from the island, Huzrin Hood, collaborated with party leaders, state civil servants, and businessmen to form the Riau Islands Province. The chosen mechanism focused on four points: (a) consolidating identity to gain political support, (b) exploiting identity exclusion demands cleavage of provinces, (c) forming provinces as a strategy for revitalizing identity and accelerating development on islands, and (d) establishing collaboration with leaders of ethnic, religious, social associations, bureaucrats, and political party leaders. The consolidation pattern is carried out by the following means: (a) informal elitist discussions, (b) seminars, (c) coordination with governors and regents, (d) research on the urgency, significance, and feasibility of becoming a province, (e) seminars and preparation of recommendations, (f) submission of proposals to the central government and the parliaments in Jakarta, (g) reviewing candidates for the province and capital city, and (h) determining the status of a new province. Finally, on Friday, October 25, 2002, [Iriana](#) Soekarno Putri, the President of Indonesia, signed [Law Number 25 of 2002 concerning the Establishment of the Province of Riau Islands](#).

Third, the cleavage and formation of Protap out of North Sumatra. The population of Protap, based on the 2015 Population Census, is 807,271. Based on religion, Protestants are the majority (78.96%), followed by Catholics (16.69%),

Muslims (3.7%), *Malim* (native belief of the Toba; 0.54%), Buddhists (0.02), and Hindus (0.005%). Toba (93%) is the majority and the rest are Nias, Simalungun, and Minangkabau. The Toba proudly identifies itself as Batak People (*Orang Batak*), a label used by foreign explorers from the early 16th century (Hidayat & Damanik, 2018). The label Batak is attached to six ethnic groups: Simalungun, Mandailing, Angkola, Pakpak, Toba, and Karo to distinguish it from Malays (Damanik, 2019b; Perret, 2010).

Protap has its historical base since the period of colonialism, *Karasidenan Tapanuli* (Castles, 1982). Its area includes North, South, Central, Sibolga, Nias, and Dairi Tapanuli. However, after the national independence, in 1956, Protap was merged into North Sumatra Province (Damanik, 2018). Protap formation was planned for 2007 and was expected to be realized by 2009. However, a protest by Protap' supporters at the 2009 North Sumatra legislative plenary session resulted in the death of Azis Angkat, the chairman of the legislature. The Plenary rejected the new province formation. Protap leaders, Chandra Panggabean, Viktor Siahaan, Datumira Simanjuntak, Burhanuddin Rajagukguk, Gelmok Samosir, Jon Haidir Samosir, and Parles Sianturi, were arrested and imprisoned. After the incident, the Mandailing elite especially addressed the issue of Christianization in the plan to form a province. The statement is based on the cover with a church background in the proposal for the province formation.

The plan for the formation of Protap faced a winding road: (a) South and Central Tapanuli, Dairi, Pakpak Bharat, Nias Regency, and Sibolga City refused to join, (b) Nias, due to its distance and separation from Sumatra, refused to join and plans to form its province, (c) South Tapanuli, dominated by Mandailing and Angkola on the grounds of religion (Islam), refused to join forces and plans to form its province, (d) Central Tapanuli Regency and Sibolga City, a mixture of Toba, Mandailing, Nias, Angkola, and Minangkabau, and a balance of religions (Islam and Christianity), chose to be gray area, (e) Pakpak Bharat Regency, for historical reasons, refused and chose to remain with North Sumatra, and (f) Dairi Regency became gray area because its territory overlaps with that of Pakpak Bharat Regency. Based on the above phenomena, undoubtedly one regency, North Tapanuli, will become a province. However, the Toba political actors are not at a loss, (a) encouraging the cleavage of villages and subdistricts, and (b) forming new regencies based on cultural areas, Silindung, Humbang, Toba, and Samosir into new regencies (Damanik, 2019a). According to juridical reasons, four regencies north of Tapanuli deserve to be made into one province.

The biggest motivation to form Protap includes (a) exclusion of identities in North Sumatra, (b) the desire to form a province on behalf of ethnicity, (c) difficulties breaking through the bureaucracy, becoming governors, deputy governors, or officials in North Sumatra, (d) negative labels and stigma against Batak of being aggressive, conflict-loving, and stubborn, (e) the development gap between the northern

parts of Tapanuli and the west and east coast of North Sumatra, and (f) expansion of political arena in the regions. The Toba believes they are superior to other groups in North Sumatra: (a) the first group in North Sumatra to have received a modern education since the German Missionaries arrived in 1864, (b) during colonialism, the Toba elite was put in strategic positions in plantations, missionary, and colonial administration, and (c) postindependence, the Toba elite secured strategic posts in North Sumatra and Jakarta.

Regional autonomy and direct elections proved to have limited the Toba elites in North Sumatra. Gradually, the Toba elite encountered difficulties breaking through the bureaucracy or becoming officials. For actors, this fact encouraged the cleavage of North Sumatra by forming the Protap. Procedurally, the formation of Protap is following Law Number 78 of 2007 concerning Procedures for the Formation, Abolition, and Merger of Regions in Indonesia. However, the juridical reason for requiring collective energy is to encourage the formation of Protap. In this section, actors polish the exclusion of identities, the systematic exclusion of officials and politicians, and the marginalization of development. Mainstreaming of identity can create grassroots support. However, the incident in 2009 became a crucial reason for the rejection of Protap's proposal. Currently, in the second period of President Jokowi, there may be a chance to reinforce the proposal. Two of Jokowi's ministers, Luhut Panjaitan (Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment) who comes from north of Tapanuli and Yasonna Laoly (Minister of Law and Human Rights) who comes from Nias had a big influence in ratifying the Protap.

Fourth, the cleavage and formation of Nias out of North Sumatra. Nias Island is located in the Indonesia Ocean, an 18-hr boat ride from Sibolga Harbor, or 1.25 min by plane from Kualanamu Airport. Nias is the farthest area from Medan, the capital of North Sumatra. Before the reformation, Nias was a regency in North Sumatra. From 1999 to 2006, Nias was cleaved into four regencies and one city: South Nias regency, West Nias Regency, North Nias regency, Nias Regency, and Gunungsitoli City. The formation of new regencies is intended to fulfill the juridical basis for the formation of the province. In 2008, Nias was planned to become one province, cleaved out of North Sumatra.

The population of Nias, based on the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in 2018, was 1,013,891. The dominant population is ethnic Nias (96%) and a small number of migrants of Batak, Javanese, and Minangkabau. Based on religion, Protestants are the majority (76.31%), followed by Catholics (18.99%), Muslims (4.61%), and Buddhists (0.05%). The main economic structures are agriculture, marine, trade, and services. The main livelihoods are agriculture and fishing. Anthropologically, the population is homogeneous and divided into clans (*mado*) and several villages (*ori*). Although homogeneous, they have different dialects, traditional house forms, rituals, and ceremonies. The differences are summarized in the expression "different villages, different customs"

(*bo'o mbanua, bo'o mbowo*). All Nias people admit that their ancestors were sent down by God in Gomo Hill, Bawomataluo area, and spread throughout the island.

Nias is one of the underdeveloped areas in North Sumatra: (a) the potential for natural resources is very minimal, (b) human resources are low, (c) the areas visited by officials are least frequently visited, (d) disposal site for dissident officials, (e) isolation of the island causes difficulties in mobility and territorial underdevelopment, and (f) the control and management are made difficult by its relative distance from the capital city of North Sumatra. The six points were wrapped up for exclusion reasons: (a) exclusion of identity so that it is less well known, (b) elite subordination in the political, social, economic, and cultural arenas, (c) the inability to contest in the political arena, and (d) development disparities compared with other regions in North Sumatra.

The momentum of decentralization has become the cornerstone of the formation of Nias' province. Social identity is created by searching for historical and cultural backgrounds. A span of control and managerial, juridical basis, as well as development gaps, require similar steps. The collective energy generated is identity exclusion, packaged through informal discussions, focus group discussions, seminars, and political negotiations. Currently, the chances of the formation of a province are extremely large, in line with the revocation of the 2019 moratorium. Joko Widodo's visit to Nias in 2019, which was the first time in the region's history, opened up opportunities for the formation of a province. The influence of Yasonna Laoly, the Indonesian Minister of Law and Human Rights who came from Nias and Luhut Panjaitan, the Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment, has the potential to enforce the formation of Nias Province. Christian Zebua, Chairman of the Preparatory Body for the Establishment of Nias Province, has a close relationship with Tito Karnavian, the Minister of Home Affairs; both generals had served in Papua.

Based on the explanation above, it is found that actors package identity into determinants of cleavage and formation of provinces, (a) in Babel, it is receiving the *Melayu Pulau* identity: marginalized, poor, and underdeveloped, as well as tracing the historical base of indigenous population and civilization who rejected *Melayu Daratan*, (b) in Kepri, it is supporting the label of *Orang Selat*: uncivilized, poor, and underdeveloped, tracing a unifying figure as a social symbol, and questioning the identity of *Melayu Darat*. The island's advancement led to the formation of provinces as a means of establishing Malay identity, (c) in Nias, underdevelopment, poverty, and disparities are bundled in political, cultural, and social identities exclusion, and (d) in Protap, the inability of elites to break through the bureaucracy and development gaps is wrapped in identity exclusion. The Protestant religion which is the majority adhered to by the elite is one of the obstacles to serving public offices in North Sumatra. The consolidation of identity, based on the description above, for

actors, moves from cultural attributes, is constructed into a social criterion, and is managed politically.

Political Actors' Game

The following descriptions are explanations of the six assumptions put forward in the introduction above. First, identity contains references, sources of motivation, and symbolic construction to understand the social world. The four provinces shift and lead to social differentiation: *Melayu Pulau* versus *Melayu Daratan* in Babel, and *Orang Selat* versus *Melayu Darat* in Kepri. Furthermore, the confirmation of identity as a differentiator was carried out by the Nias people in Nias Islands, and Toba Batak in Protap. In Babel and Kepri, the concept of Malay is differentiated based on its origins referring to the Malay originality. Likewise, Islam has received confirmation between the island and the mainland.

In Nias and Protap, Christianity has become a social basis for maintaining domination. The dominance of Christianity in Nias and Protap has been a factor in the delay in the formation of both provinces. The ethnic reality in four provinces shows the construction of identity, moving from cultural, historical to social bases to determine political bases. Identity, in this section, as stated by Hale (2004) becomes the basis for understanding the social world. Identity is the foundation of ethnic politics for designing strategies and tactics (Hale, 2008). Identity stability has never been obtained, is dynamic according to social situations (Royce, 1982), and undergoes construction in line with expectations. The construction and consolidation of identities is a hidden agenda to ensure smooth political steps.

Second, identity is considered to represent a particular characteristic and differentiate it from others. The conceptions of *Melayu Pulau*, *Orang Selat*, *Orang Nias*, and *Orang Toba* are an affirmation of social boundaries. The beginning of the spread of Islam in Babel and Kepri refers to early civilization, the reconstruction of today's social identity. In Protap and Nias, Christianity has become sociocultural boundaries. Particular characteristics are not given as mentioned by C. Geertz (1963), or ascriptive as stated by Naroll (1964), but tend to be constructive as mentioned by Barth (1969) and Hale (2008). As a foundation, a particular characteristic needs a core, cultural-based as the basis for social differentiation. In Babel and Kepri, Malay originality and the beginnings of Islamic civilization started from the islands and spread to the mainland. In Nias, the determinants are emphasized on religious isolation and homogeneity, while in Protap, it refers to history and religious homogeneity. Administrative involution is the ability of actors to play with identities as the basis for ethnic politics or as the main political category, as a basis for their political expectations.

Third, identity contains awareness, loyalty, and collective attachment to each member. Administrative involution has absolutely nothing to do with the stability of identity. Administrative involution, rather than identity, is made more

possible by juridical reasons, as noted in the proposed formation of the four provinces. The role of identity is content, social reference, and source of motivation; social radar understands the world. The social world refers to a new province. Through content, it is easier for actors to gain grassroots acceptance. Identity is a determinant of involution, but the biggest motivation is the formation of a new political arena. Grassroots tend to be mocked, actors arouse emotions, foster a sense of belonging for political purposes. Administrative involution is an actor's game by utilizing awareness and loyalty to create collective awareness.

Fourth, political actors consolidate their identities into interest groups to form new provinces. The cleavage of provinces is closely related to the wishes of political actors in the regions. Identity consolidation is considered a solution to political impasse and power-sharing. If power-sharing is deadlocked, separation becomes an alternative. Separation is carried out by cleaving the province. However, the plan must be recognized by the grassroots. Consolidation creates an intersection between situations of ethnicity and development disparities. The consolidation as described above is a political movement, a way out to overcome political stagnation (von Beyme, 1995). Identity is an ethnic representation, packaged as an interest group (Royce, 1982), to increase political expectations.

Fifth, the goal of cleavage and formation of provinces is to expand the political arena, access to economic resources, and power. In the social reality in Babel and Kepri, after the formation of the province, the initiators plunged themselves into legislative and executive candidacy, at a provincial, regency, and city levels alike. However, not all candidates were elected. In the first 5 years, 127 initiators of Babel became members of the legislature. Furthermore, five of them were elected to be legislative in Jakarta. In Kepri, 82 initiators were elected to become legislatures in regencies, cities, and provinces and 4 were elected as legislatures in Jakarta. Political expectations in Babel and Kepri can achieve their political dreams. In the Kepri, for example, the general chairman of the formation of the province was elected to be the regent of Bintan for two periods, and in 2020, he is planning to run for governor of Kepri.

In Nias and Protap, although still pending, the initiators ran for legislative positions in their respective regions, North Sumatra as well as Jakarta. The initiators vent their political ambitions to become legislative, executive, or control economic resources. After the formation of four regencies, 37 initiators were elected as legislatures in their regions, 4 became the legislative in North Sumatra, and 2 became the legislative in Jakarta. Furthermore, the initiators form institutions, foundations, or companies to obtain funds or work on regional projects. Regional projects are access to economic resources that are being watched closely by the initiators.

Sixth, administrative involution is a game for political actors. Identity exclusion was consolidated into a political tool like in Babel and Protap. Identity stability was manipulated

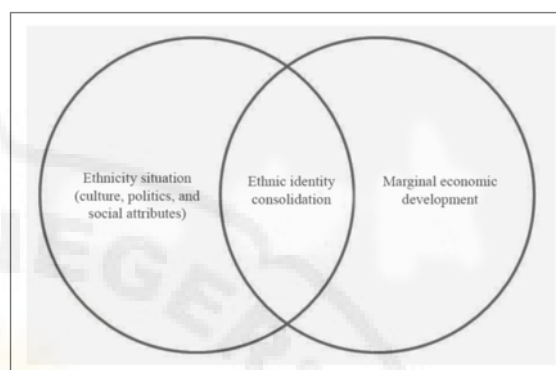


Figure 2. Identity inspection in the formation of four provinces in Sumatra.

into a political tool such as in the Kepri and Nias. Both exclusion and stability require an identity wrapped in marginalization, subordination, poverty, and underdevelopment. The main reason behind this statement is the ease of organizing grassroots according to the wishes of the actors. Four study locations show the dialectic of identity, a tug of war, affirming and rejecting other communities. Identity is not static and steady, but dynamic according to the social situation. It tends to be fluid and manipulative, containing opportunities, expectations, and advantages.

The use of identity in the formation of four provinces is an actor's game. The actors understand the social situation and use it as a political tool. Politicians speak on behalf of ethnicity, religion, and development; package identity insubordination; and poverty, to convince grassroots. Strengthening identity is not a final goal, but an attempt to break the political deadlock. Administrative involution, based on the explanation of the six assumptions above, shows the ability of actors to consolidate identities. Consolidation with an intersection pattern, the interconnection of two main aspects: the situation of ethnicity and development inequality. Both aspects boil down to identity as energy to complete political ambitions. Figure 2 shows the interrelation of the consolidation of the two aspects in the framework of the formation of four new provinces in Sumatra.

Figure 2 above shows the administrative involution mechanism in the case of cleavage and the formation of an autonomous province in Sumatra. The consolidation of identity includes situations of ethnicity linked to development gaps. Consolidation departs from the exploration of significance, symptoms or political realities, social and cultural, and development disparities. Based on the situation of ethnicity, a new identity was created, referring to historical, cultural, social, and political backgrounds. The integration of a new identity is immersed as a social boundary to gain equality. Actors realize that grassroots support can only be obtained by consolidating identities.

Not only in the four provinces in these articles but other causes of the formation of autonomous regions in Indonesia also exhibit the same phenomenon. Identity consolidation, in the concept of administrative involution, is an actor's game to open up new political arenas. On one hand, identity consolidation is meant to polarize grassroots, while on the other hand, it opens up political opportunities. In the West Sulawesi Province, for example, the actors consolidated Mandar's identity to reduce Bugis domination (Kambo, 2009). Gorontalo in Central Celebes is polarizing identity based on religion: Christianity and Islam (Hercahyani, 2008; Marzuki, 2018). Pakpak Bharat Regency in North Sumatra is a polarization of Pakpak from the dominance of Toba (Damanik, 2016); Batubara Regency is a separation of Toba and Malay, even though both follow Islam (Khairuddin, 2013); the regencies of North Labuhanbatu and South Labuhanbatu are separated between Malays, Toba, and Mandailing, although they follow Islam (Damanik, 2018); Padanglawas Utara and Padanglawas regencies are the results of separation between Angkola from Mandailing domination (Damanik, 2018); Mentawai regency was formed to reduce the domination of Minangkabau (Eindhoven, 2007); West Sumba regency (Vel, 2008), West Kalimantan (Kristianus, 2016; Maunati, 2004; Tanasaldy, 2007), East Lombok (Kumbara, 2008), Riau (Faucher, 2007), and Sambas and Buton (Percik, 2007), the same phenomenon.

In Indonesia, 215 autonomous regions were formed during two decades of reform, consisting of 7 provinces, 173 regencies, and 35 cities. As mentioned in the introduction above, new autonomous regions will continue to increase in line with the lifting of the moratorium. One thing is certain, according to the findings of this study, the consolidation of identities is a determinant of the formation of autonomous regions. Furthermore, the trend of forming autonomous regions is the birth of little kings, budget piracy, corruption, collusion, and nepotism. In the two decades of reform (1999–2009), 109 executives (regents, mayors, and governors) were arrested by the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi [KPK]). Besides, 238 legislative and government officials were arrested by the KPK. Autonomous regions become political arenas to steal state property, enrich themselves, expand political dynasties, including executive elections with a single candidate (Damanik, 2020a). Identity polarization and sentiment are used to divide groups, based on cultural and natural fortifications (Damanik, 2019b), and to strengthen intolerant attitudes (Damanik, 2020b).

Administrative involution, rather than grassroots, actors receive political, economic, and social advantages. Political advantages include (a) becoming an executive or legislative; (b) taking charge of political parties, Regional Leadership Council or Branch Leadership Council (Dewan Pimpinan Cabang [DPC]); (c) an official in the regional bureaucracy; (d) a government partner working on the project; (e) optimizing the functions of political parties in formulating policies; and (f) strengthening democratization in the regions. Furthermore, the economic advantages are the allocation of

the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD), which includes (a) personnel expenditure, (b) official expenditure, and (c) development expenditure. Political actors, legislative and executive, play a major role in the absorption of the budget. Oftentimes, state funds are stolen through a markup mechanism, or tips collection. Besides, social assistance to grassroots, social grants to places of worship, and social institutions are all managed by actors. In Indonesia, it is not a secret that the distribution of aid or grants is carried out by collecting tips or cutting aid. Social advantage and actor popularity correlated with electability in the general election.

On the contrary, for grassroots, administrative involution had no significant impact. Although grassroots understand the urgency of forming an autonomous region, they usually do not have political, economic, and social implications. Identity is only represented in government office architecture, employee attire, street names, and building colors. Also, the reality in Papua, Aceh, Bali, and West Sumatra, for example, highlights religious attributes in the form of mosques and churches, or the formulation of religion-based regional regulations (Anggriani, 2011; Hutabarat, 2015; Kurniati, 2018; Sarjana, 2018). Another reality is that the organization of identity has become the main political basis for executive and legislative elections (Daulay et al., 2019; Kristianus, 2016; Lestari, 2019; Nasrudin & Nurdin, 2018). Two decades of reform and 215 new autonomous regions later, there appears to be a lack of acceleration before a new region is cleaved out of their parent. Several autonomous regions are demanding to be reunited with parent regions because the development gap and poverty are widening.

The movement of identity or ethnic politics (Hale, 2008), based on this study, intends to (a) build a big narrative, differentiating against other groups; (b) creation of a specific identity, and (c) solutions for power-sharing. The identity movement is the consolidation of identity as a significant predictor of self-esteem, as well as the main political category demanding an autonomous province. This study, based on the description above, confirms the six assumptions put forward previously. Administrative involution, thus dividing the provinces, is a power-sharing mechanism but does not show linear progress. Administrative involution, the dwarfing and creation of four provinces, is a consolidation and confirmation of new boundaries for identity. The provincial formation is an actor's game expanding the political arena. Identity consolidation is a grassroots organizing strategy and tactic, immersed in the actor's game. Cleavage and formation of provinces, the general phenomenon of reform, is a strategy to expand the political arena. Armed with identity exclusion, grassroots are mobilized and then actors filed a lawsuit against the province. In the new province, actors build greater political opportunities to access power and economy.

Conclusion

Administrative involution only divides the province, a power-sharing mechanism but does not show linear progress.

Mainstreaming identity is intended to be a strategy and tactic to touch grassroots. Consolidation links situations of ethnicity with economic inequality, respectively, through the exploration of significance, creation of new boundaries, immersions in social identity, equality, and continuous experimentation according to ethnic situations. Consolidation of identity, for actors, is prioritized on political interests, the way out demands power-sharing. This study concludes that administrative involution, the formation of an autonomous province, is an actor's game to expand the arena and affirm political interest. It is administrative involution, rather than grassroots, that provides more advantages to actors, creating opportunities and strengthening political careers, as well as ease of access to economic resources and power. This study, theoretically, contributes to the recognition of the constructive identity paradigm and practically becomes a political tool. On one hand, organizing identity, the basis of ethnic politics and major political categories, and the potential means of demanding power-sharing, but on the other hand, the opportunity to create identity sentiments has implications for polarization, discrimination, and intolerant attitudes. The study recommends the urgency of similar research in other regions, to explore and understand ethnic political trends and tendencies in the nation-state of Indonesia.

4

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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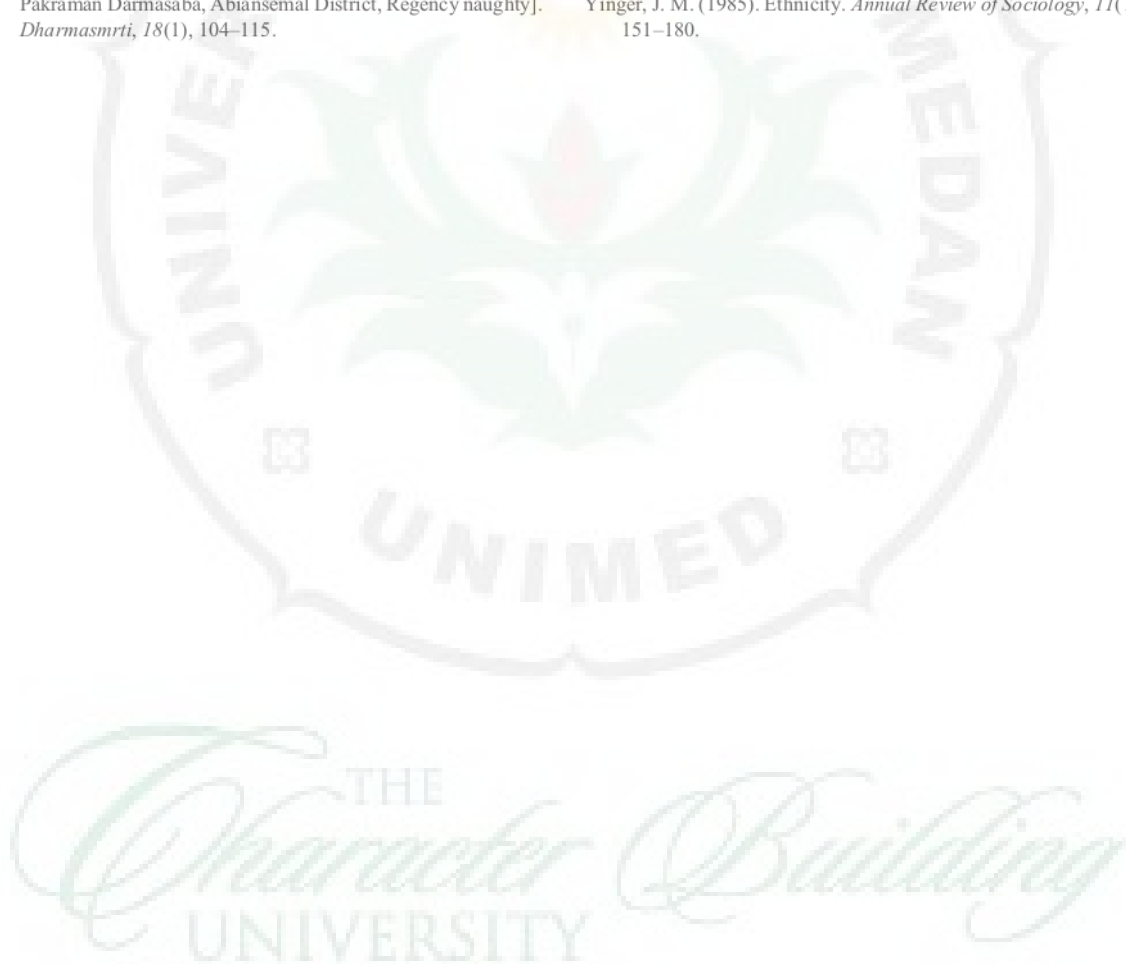
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