

Abstract

**Migration and Potential Conflict in Multi-ethnic and Multi-religious
Province of Riau Archipelago, Indonesia**

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Migration is often a self-selected process, where the migrants are relatively more risk takers with stronger “fighting” spirits as compared to the locals in either the region of origin or region of destination. It is not surprising that “migrants” are more likely to win in the competition with the local people in the regions of destination. Because Indonesia is a very large heterogeneous country, the migrants also consist of people from diverse ethnic and religious groups and the rising flow of migrants will alter the ethnic and religious compositions of the region of destination. If the migrants win and they come from different ethnic and religious background, social jealousy may arise and conflicts may be easily provoked by outsiders. Many “ethnic and religious” conflicts in Indonesia have been provoked by “outsiders” utilising the relatively “balanced” ethnic and religious composition as well as social and economic disparity among them.

Riau Archipelago is one of the richest provinces in Indonesia. It has become a magnet for people within Indonesia. The province used to be well known as the land of the Malays, an ethnic group which comprises 4.45% of the whole Indonesian population. Malays are also associated with the Muslim and indeed only a very tiny percentage of the Malays in this province are non-Muslims.

Because of its history, the Malays also often claim to be the putra daerah [the son of the land], the “owner” or “stakeholder” of the land, of the provinces of Riau Archipelago. However, the paper shows that the rising flow of migration to the province has changed the ethnic and religious composition of the province. Malays are no longer the dominant group, only forming 37.44% of the total population of the province. The province is neither an exclusively Muslim province, about one fifth of the population are non-Muslims.

The paper also argues that two districts (Batam and Riau Islands) in the province have below replacement level fertility rates. The source of rapid population growth in these districts was the migrants. Karimun, the third district, was already close to replacement level and it will soon be below replacement level with migrants being the source of population growth. A similar thing will occur in the fourth, last, district (Natuna). In short, the population growth of this province will be mainly determined by the inflow of migrants

Further, the paper analyses employment and education by ethnic and religious groups. It finds that the difference by ethnicity seems to be stronger than that by religion, especially between the

Malays and non-Malays, rather than between Muslims and non-Muslims. This finding can be partly explained by the fact that the majority of the migrants were also Muslim.

This paper contributes to a better understanding of the impact of the process of population dynamics on its ethnic and religious composition and its relations with education and employment, two important factors determining the welfare of the population.