

## 5 Nested sovereignties

### Autonomy and authority in the Indonesian borderlands

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#### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This chapter examines how, since the onset of decentralisation in 1999, ethnic border elites have struggled to create small zones of semi-autonomy at the territorial fringes of the Indonesian state. The chapter discusses how these creative practices simultaneously transform, challenge and accommodate the idea of the 'sovereign state' by juggling the power relations between the centre and periphery. Borderland zones are often seen as the *raison d'être* of state sovereignty. However, states are frequently unable to make their claims stick when the borderlands lack infrastructure, are covered in forest and are sparsely populated. Hence, the consolidation of territorial sovereignty, i.e. 'the recognition of the claim by a state to exercise supreme authority over a clearly defined territory' (the Westphalian ideal) (Zaum 2007: 3), is high on government agendas. In its role as a key symbol of state sovereignty, the borderland is often a place where central state authorities are most eager to govern and exercise power. However, the borderland is also a place where state sovereignty is most likely to be challenged, questioned and manipulated because of various transnational economic links that transcend state borders and contradict imaginations of the state as guardians of national sovereignty (van Schendel and de Maaker 2014). The classical definition of sovereignty, which presupposes a strong 'unitary' state imposing unlimited control on a clearly defined territory, is widely questioned by scholars who have taken up the challenge of conceptualising the state as fragmented rather than an *a priori*, homogenous whole. Here *de facto* state sovereignty is less clear-cut than its classical definitions entail and the existence of overlapping, nested and competing sovereignties within and across borders are increasingly recognised (Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 2006; Lund 2011; Peluso and Lund 2011).

By analysing an ongoing claim for border autonomy in the border province of West Kalimantan, I illustrate how local border elites within the legal (but fuzzy) framework of administrative decentralisation reforms attempt to create their own administrative border regency. The case illuminates how the 'state' is understood creatively and how national loyalties are claimed at the state fringes by appropriating the state rhetoric of development and good citizenship. It is argued

that, because of their contested nature, the Indonesian borderlands provide an exceptionally important site for investigating these paradoxes of state sovereignty, the changing dynamics of state–periphery relations and the kind of governance that Indonesia has experienced since decentralisation.

Since the early 1990s, the border population of the Kapuas Hulu regency (*kabupaten*), a remote and underdeveloped corner of the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan, has pushed for border development and increased local autonomy. Previously, during the New Order regime, ethnic border elites began formulating ideas about how to deal with the chronic underdevelopment of the border area. However, until the fall of President Suharto, this movement remained rather inactive, as efforts to increase local autonomy were not given much leeway under the highly authoritarian New Order regime. The rhetoric of this emerging movement was, therefore, mostly centred on practical questions of development, while issues of increased autonomy were largely downplayed (Kuyah 1992). However, after the fall of President Suharto in 1998, this movement gained momentum and re-emerged as a local response or counter-movement against the increase in outside involvement in what are perceived as local matters. By creating their own regency, the border elite expects to boost local autonomy and strengthen their control of local, natural resources and border trade. They anticipate that controlling border access will become an important political and economic resource in the near future, as enhanced commercial exchange is expected to develop between the two bordering regions of West Kalimantan (Indonesia) and Sarawak (Malaysia).

Post New Order, Law No. 22/1999 on regional autonomy, suddenly made it possible to split existing regencies into smaller ones: a process known as *pemekaran*, or ‘blossoming’ (McWilliam 2011).<sup>2</sup> The new decentralisation laws led to a general rush to create new regencies in Kalimantan and all over Indonesia (Fitriani *et al.* 2005; Vel 2007). For example, in West Kalimantan in 1999, the large border regency of Sambas was split into the Sambas and Bengkayang regencies and, in East Kalimantan, the resource-rich border regency of Bulungan was split into Bulungan, Malinau and Nunukan regencies. Later, in 2012, that regency, together with the Tana Tidung and Tarakan regencies, was transformed into the new province of North Kalimantan (Wollenberg *et al.* 2006; Tanasaldy 2007; Jakarta Globe 2012).

Portrayed as a bottom-up process in which common people can gain a larger degree of empowerment and transparency in local government matters, regional proliferation became immensely popular in Indonesia. The number of regencies rose dramatically from 298 in 1999 to 526 in 2011 (Firman 2013). Law No. 22/1999, which was hastily drawn up in the early days of decentralisation, has since been revised and superseded by more restrictive laws (Law No. 32/2004 and No. 78/2007) which, among other things, raised the minimum number of districts to be included in a new regency from three to five. This tightening was an attempt to slow down the process of the splitting of regencies. The economic incentives of large financial transfers from the central government to support new regencies and lucrative positions in the new administration have, undoubtedly,

been an important motivator for local elites. The decentralisation laws stipulate that new regencies will receive subsidies in the form of both general allocation funds and special allocation funds from the central government. More often than not, the driving force behind *pemekaran* is the urge to gain authority over various resources rather than the establishment of more accountable local governments (Roth 2007; McWilliam 2011).

### **The Kapuas Hulu borderland**

The Kapuas Hulu regency consists of 29,842 km<sup>2</sup> (20.33 per cent of West Kalimantan) divided into no less than 23 districts with a total population of only 209,860. It lies in the northernmost corner of the province, more than 700 km from the provincial capital, Pontianak, on the coast (Kabupaten Kapuas Hulu 2006). To the north, the regency shares an international border with Sarawak, Malaysia; to the east, it borders the Indonesian provinces of Central Kalimantan and East Kalimantan.

This chapter focuses specifically on the border movement that, in 2000, grew out of the five districts of Batang Lupar, Embaloh Hulu, Badau, Empanang and Puring Kencana. The five districts (covering approximately 6,296 km<sup>2</sup> or 22 per cent of the Kapuas Hulu regency) make up the largest stretch of territory along the international border with Sarawak within the ‘mother’ regency. In 2007, the population was estimated to have reached approximately 37,000 in the five border districts (PPKPU 2007).

The leading members of the border movement are primarily ethnic Iban, who are all part of a small but prominent ethnic elite group of customary leaders, village headmen, members of the regency assembly and regency government officials.<sup>3</sup> The Iban make up the largest section of the population in the five districts while the two other ethnic groups, the Maloh and Malay, make up a small minority.<sup>4</sup> The Maloh and Malay support the movement, but because of their minority status, they are less influential, which creates a fair amount of inter-ethnic distrust. Sections of the Maloh and Malay communities see the border movement as primarily an Iban project with the purpose of capturing political power and natural resources in the proposed new regency.<sup>5</sup> However, such inter-ethnic distrust is partly unspoken in order for the movement to appear strong and united. Ethnic unity is constantly being promoted by the movement members on both sides of the ethnic divide, and, by focusing on their shared ‘borderland identity’, ethnicity is being downplayed as less relevant (Eilenberg and Wadley 2009). Despite this inter-ethnic rivalry, the various groups realise that, for the movement to succeed, the five districts must at least officially appear as one ‘border community’. Therefore, such concerns remain veiled, even as tension continues to build along accentuated ethnic lines. Yet, despite these attempts to ignore ethnicity, the issue is an important one. For example, during local meetings, some Iban participants made jokes about the movement being called the ‘Free Iban Movement’, or GIM (*Gerakan Iban Merdeka*), seeing it primarily as a movement for Iban revitalisation. The reference here is to the ‘Free Aceh

Movement', or GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*), in North Sumatra. Among some members, such jokes express the dreams of promoting Iban *adat* (traditional) authority and reclaiming control of what they perceive as their traditional territory, which is now claimed by other ethnic groups. Later, during the same meeting, Iban members changed the acronym GIM to GBM (*Gerakan Bersama Maju*) or 'Jointly We Prosper Movement', and, as such, downplayed the issue of ethnicity. In other parts of Indonesia, *pemekaran* is often carried out along ethnic lines, which, in many cases, has resulted in violent conflicts (Duncan 2007; Aspinall 2011).

The border movement is using the experience of the split of other border regencies in the province, especially the subdivision of the Sambas regency into the Bengkayang and Sambas regencies in 1999.<sup>6</sup> One of the leading members of the border regency movement is a highly educated Iban (originally from the Kapuas Hulu border area) who now upholds an influential government position as head of a regency-level office in the Bengkayang regency. Having a front row seat in which to observe the success of these new regencies and the complicated political processes, which *pemekaran* demands, he, together with a small group of other well-off men, initiated the border movement. The movement further feeds into a larger alliance of border communities known as the 'Forum for Border Community Care', positioned in the provincial capital, Pontianak. This forum was created in 2004 with the purpose of lobbying for and promoting the overall development of the border regions of West Kalimantan; its members are from all the ethnic groups living along the entire length of the border.<sup>7</sup> The forum has mainly been used by the border movement as a meeting place for consolidating new alliances, especially with provincial government officials and politicians. All the founding members of the movement originate from the border area, but they live and work in or near the provincial capital and only seldom visit the border area.

### North border regency

In early March 2007, after numerous meetings and discussions, representatives and supporters from the five districts (approximately 400 people) met with the regency head at an official gathering in the regency office in Putussibau. A group known as the 'Committee for the Establishment of the North Border Regency' (*Panitia Pembentukan Kabupaten Perbatasan Utara*, PPKPU), which was the main organisation pursuing the formation of the new regency, boldly proclaimed the new regency name to be 'The North Border Regency' (*Kabupaten Perbatasan Utara*). At the same time, they presented a final report of several hundred pages containing the legally stipulated requirements for a new regency and the signatures of all of the local (elite) supporters (Equator News 2007a). This report, which emphasised the considerable potential of the border area and its current underdevelopment, was the outcome of an unofficial feasibility study carried out by the committee in cooperation with a Jakarta-based NGO (PPKPU 2007).

In the period between 2004 and 2007, the movement had carried out an extensive lobbying campaign. In February 2006, it sent out its first formal letter of aspiration to the regency head, presenting the plan for a new regency. To give the letter an extra touch of formality, the name of the proposed regency was stamped on the letterhead in large black type. Then, in late 2007, the committee attempted to precipitate the *pemekaran* process (Equator News 2007b). With the disappointments of failed efforts of the past in mind, the border movement has been eager to push on. Early in the presidency of Megawati (2001–2004), the same border elite had applied to the central government to be recognised as a Special Authority Region (*otorita daerah khusus*) and, thereby, receive favourable conditions such as free border trade and a higher degree of political autonomy (in line with the status of Batam). According to leading movement members, a letter of decree that would have granted special authority to the border area was being prepared. Then, in 2004, a new president was elected, and the decree was supposedly postponed. A few days before President Megawati left office in October 2004, she signed the revised decentralisation legislation (Law No. 32/2004), which replaced the former law from 1999. This new law states the requirements for creating a Special Administrative Zone (*kawasan khusus*) in an area within a regency or province of special importance for national interest. This autonomous zone would enjoy the status of a free trade zone (Law No. 32/2004, Chapter II, part 2, article 9). During the Megawati presidency, the government prepared a development strategy for the Kalimantan border region, and, according to the members of the movement, the change in the central administration turned out to be a significant setback for the lobbying efforts of the border movement at the time (Bappenas 2003). In a 2007 statement outlining the urgency of the current campaign, a border committee member said,

We need to push forward now and keep going. We cannot wait for official approval from the regency office. Government regulations, as they look today, may be different tomorrow so we need to act while there is still an opportunity.<sup>8</sup>

The huge popularity of *pemekaran* throughout Indonesia has put immense strain on the central government's resources and budget, while outcomes in the form of improved services for the majority of people have, so far, been meagre. Meanwhile, corruption and nepotism have reportedly increased; a development that the central government is largely blaming on self-interested regional elites (Bappenas and UNDP 2008). Such accusations have since fostered widespread protest from provincial and regency assembly members who accuse the central government of being arrogant and not committed to the development of the outer regions and the re-allocation of promised economic benefits from the centre to its margins.

### Appropriating state rhetoric of security and sovereignty

The first step in the *pemekaran* process as stipulated in the government laws and regulations is a demonstration of the viability of a proposed new regency and justification of the need for its creation. As indicated by the name, ‘The North Border Regency’, the PPKPU committee clearly specified the common ground and key resources of the five districts involved. Despite its vast natural resources, the border area, after more than 60 years of Indonesian independence, is still categorised as a region of extreme poverty with insufficient infrastructure, health services and education facilities (KNPDT 2007). As proclaimed by participants during an August 2006 borderland ‘awareness-raising’ meeting that was held to discuss the advantages of splitting the regency:

It has now been 63 years since we became an independent nation, but our roads are still yellow [dirt] and at night, our lamps are still dark. Is this the result of independence? [A chorus of voices from the crowd replied], ‘We still live in misery and poverty. Development has left us behind’.

(PPKPU 2007 – my translation)

The main argument put forward for splitting the Kapuas Hulu regency was its sheer size and lack of capacity to develop its outer districts. Members of the border committee stressed that the ‘mother’ regency of Kapuas Hulu was too large, and the past and current regency administrations had not succeeded in developing the border area compared to other areas in the regency. As a result, they said, the border people were forced to act by themselves if any changes were to take place:

Until now the border communities have just been a tool of central government in extracting natural resources, that is why the community wants their own autonomy, to take control by themselves, and at least have their own regency.<sup>9</sup>

Applying the central government rhetoric of security, sovereignty and development and emphasising the role of border inhabitants as loyal citizens, were other conscious strategies among the movement members for attaining government good will for their cause. The members proclaimed that the creation of a new border regency was a local effort to maintain a unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia (*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*); as enhanced political and economic autonomy would prevent acts of separatism among the border communities. Furthermore, the border regency would become the new, bright, outward face of Indonesia towards Malaysia and, most importantly, would improve national defence and guarantee security (Equator News 2006). For centuries, the border communities have been seen as a national security threat because of their strong cross-border ties (Eilenberg and Wadley 2009; Eilenberg 2012a). Since the onset of decentralisation, the shifting reform governments

have increased their focus on the nation's borderlands as regions in dire need of development and strong state presence (Bappenas 2004, 2008). Post New Order, numerous news reports touching upon the issue of national loyalty among the West Kalimantan borderland population have appeared in the national press, expressed in headlines such as, 'Communities Living along the Kalimantan-Sarawak Border are Still Isolated within Their Own Country' (Kompas 2000). Such a depiction highlights isolation, underdevelopment and cross-border ethnicity as the main reasons for cross-border solidarity and subsequent lack of national consciousness. As expressed in the headlines of the main provincial newspaper, 'The Border Citizens Still Rely on Malaysia' (Pontianak Post 2005). The numerous news headlines depicting the nation's borderlands as lawless and out of state control triggered a national debate on the inability of the central government in upholding the territorial security and sovereignty of the nation. This debate and the chronic underdevelopment of the borderlands in 2010 resulted in the creation of a 'National Agency for Border Development' that included members of the Indonesian military, relevant ministries and governors of the affected border regions (Jakarta Post 2010b; Perpres 2010). The main role of the border agency was to coordinate development initiatives in the borderlands and boost military presence (Jakarta Post 2010a).<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the *pemekaran* process, movement members were quick to disavow involvement in past public so-called 'illegal' activities in the border area and to claim that such activities were the act of desperate people and were solely in response to a long-standing economic disparity along the border. For example, from 2000 to 2005, the five districts were the scene of large-scale timber smuggling across the border to Malaysia that attracted immense national and international attention (Wadley and Eilenberg 2005; Eilenberg 2012b). According to the movement members, the only way to prevent any further illegal activities and enhance national loyalty was to involve border communities in developing the area through engagement in local-level politics and economic affairs. As stated by a regency assembly member on the motives behind a new regency:

We do not want the central government to think 'danger'; and what are the politics of the border people in creating a regency. We are Indonesian. We continue to love Indonesia. However, what we want is a change and advancement of the border area. That is our argument and motivation behind a new Border Regency.<sup>11</sup>

### **Regional autonomy or secession**

Movement members may have officially proclaimed their strong national loyalty in local news media, but, during the heated debates in closed local meetings, becoming part of Malaysia was often mentioned as a final option. The Iban border population generally accepted their status as Indonesian citizens, and everybody knew that secession was impossible. However, the threat clearly

indicated the preparedness of the committee to play the ‘border card’ in political negotiations with the regency and central governments. Fear of local separatism has often been expressed by government and news media as a possible future outcome of such special borderland circumstances (Kompas 2001). As an excited supporter of regency splitting announced:

We will just join Malaysia. We will organise training over there and rebel. We will still try the nice way first but if official procedures turn out to be unworkable, well, what can we do? We will get help from smart people in Malaysia.<sup>12</sup>

During the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia, Raja Brooke, the Sarawak ruler at the time, offered the Iban border population the opportunity to secede to Sarawak, although such offers never resulted in concrete action.<sup>13</sup> However, the border communities were, throughout (and prior to) the Dutch colonial presence in the border area, seen as unreliable and rebellious citizens (Eilenberg 2014a).<sup>14</sup> One major contributing factor to these skirmishes between colonial administrators and the border population was a long history of movement, particularly for trade and warfare that did not recognise arbitrary state borders. The border population strategically took advantage of the artificial line dividing the Dutch and British territories. Dutch attempts to subdue these recalcitrant subjects and extend the colonial administrative discipline to the unruly border areas have resulted in a pronounced local suspicion towards state authority among the majority of the border population (Wadley 2004).

The long historic cross-border relations and ongoing, mostly rhetorical support from small segments of the Iban population in Sarawak boost local confidence among the border population. As one committee member commented during a local meeting, ‘We can make things very difficult for them (regency and provincial officials)’, referring to former acts of vigilantism and close ethnic ties to similar ethnic groups in Sarawak. The border populations are notorious for acting on their own when they feel that the government system is unjust and not operating in accordance with the special circumstances of life along the border (Eilenberg 2011). Despite these statements, the committee members always stressed that everything they did would have to conform to the law and that they should not attempt to win independence like Aceh. No attempt should be made to disturb the stability of the border. However, on the question of what would possibly happen if the border communities were not given increased autonomy and their own regency, a customary leader answered:

If the border area is not allowed to emerge as a new regency by the central or local government, I am afraid that many of the communities would lose their faith in the unity of the nation and want to separate themselves or break away to Malaysia. If you ask the community, 99 per cent would prefer to be under the political control of Malaysia, and that would put the unity of the nation in danger. Well, older people like us try to protect the unity of



the Indonesian nation by suggesting the creation of a new regency instead of separatism.<sup>15</sup>

In 2012, the committee decided to change the name of the proposed new regency from the more contested and politicised ‘North Border Regency’ to ‘Banua Landjak Regency’. This was done in order to send a message of national loyalty to the central government and indicate their deep attachment to the region. ‘Banua Landjak’ could be translated to ‘My homeland/fatherland’ (Sinar Harapan 2013). History plays an important role in ethnic consolidation in the border area, and past events are generally recalled with great pride. Iban connections to the ancestral past are kept alive through an intricate system of tracing one’s ancestry (*tusut*). Most Iban in the border area are able to remember and trace their descent for as many as five generations.

### **Border access and resource control**

On 20 April 2006, approximately 100 people representing the five districts met with members of the regency assembly in the regency capital, Putussibau. The representatives were greeted positively, and the assembly subsequently issued a letter of decree supporting the formation of a new regency in the border area (KepDPRD 2006). Before issuing this decree, a handful of regency assembly members originating from the border area had carried out intensive lobbying within the assembly.

In addition, the regency head of Kapuas Hulu initially appeared to be supportive of the idea of a new regency, attending meetings and personally donating funds to the border committee (Akcaya 2007). Nevertheless, he also seemed to be deliberately stalling the process. Like the regency heads of other resource-rich regencies, he has, since the outset of decentralisation, consolidated his power and support through income from natural resources. Informal interviews with regency government officials in Putussibau produce a picture of a general, although not publicly expressed, worry within the regency office that the mother regency risks losing major income from strategic resources, such as timber, minerals and the future lucrative border trade, if it is split. In the budget for the period 2008–2009, the regency Department of Plantations and Forestry in Kapuas Hulu planned to use no less than 41.3 billion rupiah to develop the forestry and plantation sector in the border area (Perhut Kapuas Hulu 2007). The law further requires the mother regency to economically support the new regency for the first few years before the new regency receives its own fiscal transfers from the central government. The creation of the ‘North Border Regency’ could further isolate the mother regency, which is already the most remote regency in the province. If the new regency is created, the mother regency will be geographically and (possibly) economically isolated in the most northern corner of the province. The sheer distance to the provincial capital, more than 700 km, makes border access highly important for the local economy; Sarawak economic centres across the border are much closer than the provincial capital (Wadley 2000).

According to a border committee member, the main reason for the regency head to stall the regency splitting was to maintain control of the resource-rich border region:

Now we are actually able to fulfil the requirements for creating a new regency put forward by central government, but the mother regency seems to be hesitant about letting us go. It keeps holding on to our tail. There is too much potential so they cannot let go and let the new regency emerge. I think if Putussibau lets the border area become a regency, Putussibau will die.<sup>16</sup>

Transnational networks add to the complexity of this case. During the many local meetings about the new border regency, the committee members invited several Malaysian ‘investors’ from across the border. It was envisaged that a possible new regency should co-operate closely with private business partners within the palm oil and rubber industry across the border in Sarawak and develop large plantations along the border under the control of local ethnic communities. Many of these ‘investors’ were closely connected with committee members through kinship ties and were deeply involved in the logging boom that ended in 2005 (Wadley and Eilenberg 2005). Economic support from wealthy Malaysians could end up being a key factor in realising the establishment of the new regency. Even more importantly, cross-border resources may make the new regency more autonomous and, thus, less dependent on central government politics and financial support. As indicated by a local executive,

if we already had a new regency here, many smart people from Malaysia would come and invest their money in plantations and so on. There are plenty of them waiting across the border. But for now, they do not want to come, as they do not trust the government.<sup>17</sup>

Several members of the border movement announced that they would not allow any outside companies to enter local forestlands without prior agreements with local communities. As stipulated by a customary leader in a 2007 interview: ‘Many companies want to enter the area and open oil palm plantations, but we have not yet given our consent. We will wait until we have gained official authority over the area.’<sup>18</sup> These comments are symptomatic of the widespread mistrust of government authorities and of the conviction that they (the border communities) would be better off handling things themselves. However, these local cross-border negotiations were partly side-tracked by the regency government (with support from central government and military) in 2006–2007 when the regency allocated large tracts of land within the five border districts for plantation development to the Sinar Mas Group, Indonesia’s largest palm oil producer (Suara Bekakak 2006).<sup>19</sup> Internally, within the border movement, this move by the regency government to develop the border region was seen as an attempt to fortify regency authority over the rebellious districts by claiming ownership over land and resources.<sup>20</sup> Despite large-scale protests by local

customary leaders, Sinar Mas, with support from the regency government, quickly began converting large tracts of land into palm oil plantations maintained by imported migrant workers from outside the province (Kompas 2011).

At the time of writing (August 2015), the border movement was still awaiting a formal approval to their request for a new regency and the outcomes seemed as uncertain as ever. A positive outcome was highly dependent on rapid political changes taking place locally and nationally and on the readiness of higher-level authorities to take action. The future of the *pemekaran* process very much depended on the good will of key politicians in Jakarta and of local government administrative heads, like the regency head and governor, who have their own, often divergent, agendas for the border area. Since 2005, the regency head of Kapuas Hulu, together with four other regency heads, has been involved in yet another *pemekaran* process. These five regency heads wish to split from the current province of West Kalimantan and create a new province, Kapuas Raya. It is too early to forecast what consequences this plan may have for the future of the border regency, but all available regency resources seemed directed towards carrying out this grand plan for a new province (Kalimantan Review 2008; Jakarta Post 2013). Further, during an interview in late 2007, the head of the provincial legislative assembly (DPRD) in the provincial capital, Pontianak, expressed strong doubts as to whether a new border regency would have any chance of being approved at the central level. According to him, one of the major hurdles was the low population density. With only about 30,000 inhabitants, the proposed border regency would be too sparsely populated to survive on its own. He estimated that it might take another five to ten years before the border population could be ready to manage its own regency.

In the heated debate about the viability of many new regencies in recent years, some national and regional commentators have suggested that the central government should prioritise the establishment of new regencies and provinces in regions with special needs such as underdeveloped and sensitive state border areas. This, they argue, would be in line with one of the original ideas behind decentralisation, namely that of facilitating and ensuring national unity (Equator News 2007b; Jakarta Post 2007a; Kompas 2007). However, despite the creation of a new border agency, the central government has been hesitant and vague regarding the possibility of new regencies in the border regions. The central government's plans for the borderlands will not necessarily involve an increase in local autonomy, but more likely would foster the reclaiming of central authority over these resource-rich peripheral regions (Eilenberg 2014b). From 2009 to 2012, a moratorium was imposed on regional expansion through *pemekaran*, although, several times, local pressure conceded by the House of Representatives has insisted on continuing to open new administrative regions (Aspinall 2013). For example, in October 2013, the Regional Representatives Council (DPRD) in West Kalimantan expressed its strong support for the creation of the new border regency; however, such support does not necessarily reflect the views of the central government in Jakarta (Sinar Harapan 2013). The central government has continuously expressed reservations about the rapidity with

which authority and funds are being transferred to the regencies. They argue that the results are mixed and often lead to communal conflict and rampant rent-seeking among political elites, while the benefits for ordinary citizens are less obvious (Bappenas and UNDP 2008; Jakarta Post 2007b, 2012; Tempo 2013).

## Conclusions

The *pemekaran* case demonstrates the complexity of relations between local elites and the various levels of government bureaucracy. It constitutes a concrete example of how border elites, over time, have attempted to negotiate authority over resources along the border. Furthermore, the chapter argues that such negotiations are carried out through the appropriation of the state rhetoric of development for local purposes and (personal) interests. At the same time, cross-border connections and trade are used to resist government authority, thus challenging its territorial sovereignty and power.

Although it is still uncertain whether the border movement will succeed in creating a new autonomous regency, the border elite will continue to exploit opportunities presented by decentralisation and the duality of life along the border in order to negotiate authority and attempt to strengthen their position. The alliances formed or renewed during the *pemekaran* process will, despite the process' uncertain outcome, feed into local elite networks of influence. The struggle over access to resources will be waged between such border elite movements, regency officials and central government agencies in the borderland in the years to come. The *pemekaran* phenomenon suggests a complex relationship between state institutions and local control that helps shed light on the often ambivalent relationship between border populations in Kapuas Hulu and their state, as well as the more general processes of state formation taking place along the edges of the Indonesian nation state. It highlights the nested and fragmented character of sovereign power in these regions that is comprised of multiple and overlapping semi-autonomous cores of power, and further shows how competing loyalties (ethnic, national, regional, cross-border) are negotiated on a daily basis. Honest attempts are being made by certain resourceful segments of the border population to attract the attention of highly placed politicians to the chronic underdevelopment experienced by the majority of the inhabitants of the immediate border area. However, despite such good intentions, behind the scenes a mounting struggle for border access and resource control is exposing old sentiments and alliances often consolidated along ethnic lines.

## Notes

- 1 Large sections of this chapter draw upon data previously presented in (Eilenberg 2012a).
- 2 *Pemekaran* not only refers to the splitting of regencies but also to other levels of administrative fragmentation like the creation of new provinces, districts, villages and hamlets (Kimura 2007).

- 3 The movement further includes a small handful of Jakarta-based supporters from the University of Indonesia and civil servants from central state ministries like the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of National Education.
- 4 Compared to the Maloh and Malay, the Iban have strong cross-border ethnic ties with the Iban in Sarawak where the people make up the largest single ethnic group.
- 5 The Iban, and especially the Maloh, have a long history of inter-ethnic confrontation and conflict over access to land and resources dating back to the colonial period (King 1976).
- 6 Law No. 10/1999.
- 7 *Forum Peduli Masyarakat Perbatasan Kalimantan Barat* (FPMP).
- 8 Personal interview, Badau, 20 March 2007.
- 9 Personal interview, Lanjak, 1 March 2007.
- 10 Another more urgent reason for the central government in creating the border agency was to gain control of and access to natural resources and ‘unexploited’ land for plantation development in the borderlands (Eilenberg 2014b).
- 11 Personal interview, Putussibau, 13 March 2007.
- 12 Personal interview, Lanjak, 21 March 2007.
- 13 See Letter to Nederlands-Indië Governor-General Jacob from Charles Brooke, 25 September 1882, Mailrapport No. 1066, Ministerie van Koloniën, Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Netherlands.
- 14 The Iban population have a long and contested history of conflict and confrontation with pre-colonial and colonial states in the region today known as Kapuas Hulu. Prior to the Dutch colonial intrusions the region was under the authority of several small Malay kingdoms to whom the various Dayak groups paid tribute. However the rebellious Iban living in the hilly borderlands refused to pay tribute and were known as the ‘free Dayaks’ that were under nobody’s authority (Eilenberg 2014a).
- 15 Personal interview, Embaloh Hulu, 13 June 2007.
- 16 Personal interview, Badau, 19 March 2007.
- 17 Personal interview, Lanjak, 1 August 2007.
- 18 Personal interview, Lanjak, 28 March 2007.
- 19 Among the border population, only very few have formal legal titles on their land and, therefore, are vulnerable to encroachment from plantation companies backed by state power and regulations (Borneo Tribune 2008). Most lands form local categories under various forms of customary land ownership, which through centuries, have been passed from generation to generation through intricate systems of rights (Wadley 1997).
- 20 Personal interview, Pontianak, 3 March 2011.

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