



## The Identity of "Negeri Seribu Suluk" as the Government's Appreciation of Malay Culture in Riau

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**ABSTRACT:** This article discusses how the background of a places' identity is formed and how it affects it. The identity place describes the place of the reality in it, about how society and infrastructure are constructed. For example, the identity of Negeri Seribu Suluk is the identity of the Rokan Hulu regency, which was formed in 1999. Negeri Seribu Suluk is one of the government's appreciations for Malay culture. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The results show that the identity built is based on Malay culture, close to Islamic nuances. The effects can be seen from two elements, namely the identity of people's places: physical appearance, behaviour, attitudes, and feelings. The other element is the identity of an area: physical forms, symbolic forms, institutional forms, individual perceptions, and collective perceptions.

**Keywords:** Place Identity, Negeri Seribu Suluk, Appreciation, Malay Culture

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is currently experiencing very rapid changes, both minor and significant, in terms of politics, infrastructure and other aspects (kompasiana, 2018). The developments that have occurred have put Indonesia in a position that must be very careful in choosing the best steps in the future. The impact of development resulted in scour in the cultural field, which made people prioritize individualism. Cultural development raises concerns about the loss of the individual and the distinctiveness of one place to another. It causes place identity to become a crucial issue in regional planning (Ernawati, 2011). This situation aligns with the global movement to protect places with significant cultural heritage.

The city is a space that becomes a place for various activities, and the space includes land space, sea space, and air space as a place for humans and other living things. Soetomo (in ranchman, 2010) explains that the city includes two aspects, namely the physical aspect as a form of space and the human element as the subject of development, both of which are essential aspects that cannot be separated. It explains the attachment between humans and space, in this case, the place they live. Relp (1976) explains the main characteristics that form spatial identity: the physical structure formed, the facilities contained therein, and the meaning created by its users. The city or urban area is formed as a place of spiritual, material, social and political expression, which in its development can reflect the shape, value, and identity of its inhabitants (Fachrudin & Syaodih, 2021). The ability to feel the place value arises from the identity that can be felt and seen either by oneself or by others that distinguishes it from other places.

The identity of place is considered crucial to keeping an area influenced by the progress of the times. Rokan Hulu Regency is one of the regencies in Riau Province that applies place identity. The identity of "Negeri Seribu Suluk" is used as the main identity of Rokan Hulu Regency. The identity is raised based on the cultural values contained in the area. Negeri Seribu Suluk means that Rokan Hulu Regency is an area rich in religious nuances. The identity of Negeri Seribu Suluk was strengthened by the enactment of PERDA No. 3 of 2018 concerning Negeri Seribu Suluk (PERDA Kabupaten Rokan Hulu No. 3 Tahun 2018 Tentang Rokan Hulu Seribu Suluk, 2018). Therefore, Negeri Seribu Suluk is used as the identity and the nickname of Rokan Hulu Regency. One of the reasons formation of identities and predicates by the government is a form of appreciation for the Malay culture in the area and the government's efforts to introduce and maintain the culture to continue in globalization.

The identity of Negeri Seribu Suluk has been compared to that of Rokan Hulu since its establishment in 1999. The formation was based on a decision from the government and customary figures. Like other regencies in Riau Province, Rokan Hulu chose this identity to distinguish it from other regencies. The identity of Negeri Seribu Suluk has been constructed for a long time in terms of infrastructure, religious activities, and others. This study was conducted to see the effects caused by the identity of the Negeri Seribu Suluk in Rokan Hulu, ranging from construction to social society, to clarify the background of the government's appreciation of Malay culture. The identity theory proposed by

Proshansky (1978), later developed by Jianchao Peng et al. (2020), is used to see how the construction occurs and the effects caused by the identity of the Negeri Seribu Suluk. The theory describes the identity of a place into 2, namely the People's Place Identity and the Place Identity (Peng et al., 2020).

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

### *Place Identity Theory*

Place identity is a versatile concept on which many psychological theories about the relationship between humans and the environment are built (Zimmerbauer et al., 2012) (Gieseeking, Jack; Mangold, 2014). Social constructivist place identity theory highlights individual subjective perceptions of geographic space. It provides broad insight into disciplines such as geography, sociology, psychology, social sciences, environmental sciences and so on (P. D. Groote et al., 2000). Identity theory was first introduced by Proshansky (1978), he defines temporal identity as a dimension of self that defines personal identity concerning the physical environment through a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, values, goals, preferences, skills and relevant tendencies with a particular background (Proshansky, 1978). In the last 40 years, the theory of identity has been developed by many research experts, including (Carrus et al., 2005; Eben Saleh, 1998; P. Groote & Haartsen, 2008; Hauge, 2007; Huigen & Meijering, 2005; Peterson, 1988; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977; Twiggwe-Ross et al., 2003; White et al., 2008) to date.

The identity of the place is broadly disseminated in discussing planning, regional development, cultural preservation, cultural appreciation, tourism, environmental management, local conflicts, and so on. Researchers use place identities in many different contexts, increasing their description and scope. The use of place identity is one solution to the problem of the relationship between people and places. A person's perception of a place comes from direct or indirect contact with the place. Place identity is considered not only as an objective physical feature but also on less tangible meanings, memories, and information from other people, the past and future (Peng et al., 2020).

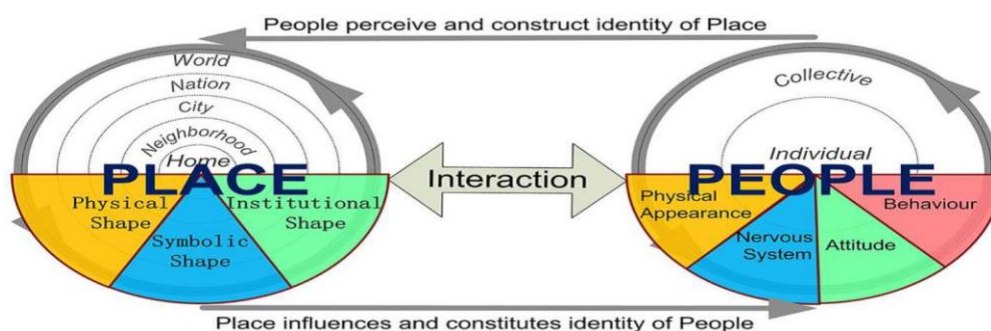


Figure 1. On Less Tangible Meanings, Memories, and Information from other People, the Past and Future

Figure 1 explains that the identity of the place is divided into two parts. A person's place identity and the identity of a place are indeed judged to be the same but not the same. Both embody the subjective bond between humans and the real world. People's place identity is that part of an individual's personality associated with a significant place in their identity formation. The identity of a place is the personality of the place. These personalities are often ascribed to the places they live or care about (Peng et al., 2020). As in Figure 1, through people's interactions with a place, places influence and subsequently shape people's social and personal identities (Nario-Redmond et al., 2004). Then people perceive and construct the identity of a place. Although place identity is generated from people's awareness and thought, identity is formed from physical, symbolic, institutional, and place components (Raagmaa, 2002). The identity of the place is not just talking about physical awareness. Place identity is believed to be a social construction based on physical reality. Still, we cannot ignore the objective and quality components of places and people, which are also part of identity. To study the identity of a person's place or the identity of a place, generally analyze it by looking at it from two sides, including external appearance and internal appearance.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is descriptive research by applying qualitative research methods. Qualitative research aims to gain a general understanding of social reality from the participant's perspective. This understanding cannot be determined in advance but is obtained after analyzing the social realities that focus on research. Then a conclusion is drawn in the form of a general understanding of these realities (Rosady, 2006). Qualitative methods with a descriptive approach aim to look in detail at the social processes that occur in an area. This study looks at how a place identity is formed and constructed and the effects of place identity. The research focus is Rokan Hulu Regency which is one of the regencies in Riau Province and applies place identity with cultural concepts. Primary data sources include the government, customary and religious figures, political figures, business actors, and society. Secondary data is used to strengthen the results in writing related to this study. Data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation. Based on the implementation of observations used to see how developments occur, the observations used are participant and non-participant. Interviews were conducted with 14 respondents incorporated in the primary data and had been specifically selected to determine the results of this study. Documentation in the form of photos, archives, data, laws, news, websites, and others is used to support the strength of the data in the research conducted.

## **RESULTS**

The results show that the Rokan Hulu identity has been introduced since the beginning of the Regency. Identity is also a predicate strengthened and explained in the Regional Regulation of Rokan Hulu Regency No. 3 of 2018 concerning Rokan Hulu as the Negeri Seribu Suluk. The identity of the place of "Negeri Seribu Suluk" is appointed based on the reality formed periodically

through local social and cultural selection. The construction carried out has increased drastically from 2010 until now. The predicate Negeri Seribu Suluk is strengthened by the legal basis described above to provide a foundation for society to understand its true meaning and foster public awareness to make it happen. The predicate and identity are formed based on the Malay culture in Rokan Hulu, where the word Suluk is taken from the activities carried out by the majority of the Malay tribe to get closer to Allah SWT.

The identity used and known is formed based on an agreement between the government and customary and religious figures. Although the government became the foremost pioneer in its formation, one of the reasons the government chose the predicate and identity was as an appreciation of culture, where cultural/religious/customary figures are one unit in Rokan Hulu. Customary, cultural, and religious figures were the ones who pioneered the expansion of the Kampar, which led to the issuance of Law No. 53 of 1999 concerning the formation of the Rokan Hulu Regency. The results showed a strong relationship between the identity of the place and society. Of course, broad construction cannot be carried out solely by the government. Still, the role of society and other stakeholders in Rokan Hulu Regency is also considerable. To see the effects caused by the identity of Negeri Seribu Suluk following table presents the explanation:

Table 1. The Identity of Negeri Seribu Suluk

	<b>External Appearance</b>	<b>Inner Thought</b>
<b>People</b>	<p><b>Physical Appearance:</b> shown by Muslim/Muslim women's clothing following Syar'i provisions and government regulations regarding obligatory prayers in congregation and recommendations for wearing robes.</p> <p><b>Behaviour:</b> evidenced by the implementation of religious activities such as Ratik Togak, Haul, Menosah, and Suluk activities.</p>	<p><b>Attitude:</b> shown by how people think in making a choice, some rules in the month of Ramadan, and how business actors determine sales.</p> <p><b>Feelings:</b> indicated by the role of identity in colouring Rokan Hulu from the form of social participation in activities with Islamic and cultural nuances.</p>
	<p><b>Physical form:</b> indicated by the construction of physical buildings such as a grand mosque, district entrance gate, monument,</p>	<p><b>Individual Perception:</b> society, religious/cultural figures, politics, business actors, and the government agree and believe that</p>

<p><b>Place</b></p>	<p>roundabout, Malay kingdoms, and various buildings that symbolize Suluk.</p> <p><b>Symbolic form:</b> indicated by the name of the area as Negeri Seribu Suluk, famous for the number of people who carry out religious activities, naming places with Malay nuances, preserving regional dances and Malay culture by making things mandatory that must be present at every official event, and the Maghrib Movement Recite.</p>	<p>the identity of Negeri Seribu Suluk is in accordance with the established reality, which symbolizes Islamic wealth following Malay culture.</p> <p><b>Collective Perception:</b> in this section, the role of stakeholders is very influential, especially the government, namely regional leaders who pioneer all kinds of construction to realize identity.</p> <p>Development planning and application of regulations</p>
	<p><b>Institutional form:</b> evidenced by the widespread enthusiasm of the Malay society who hold tightly to culture, the existence of traditional halls, customary density, LAMR (Lembaga Adat Melayu Riau), religious organizations and associations, the rise of Suluk and Organisasi Perangkat Daerah (OPD) that carry out government affairs in the cultural field and part of the welfare of the people.</p>	<p>according to Islamic concepts are emphasized in order to create a social reality with a paired identity.</p>

## DISCUSSIONS

Rokan Hulu, before officially becoming a definitive district in 1999, this area had a long story and history because this area has existed since colonial times and before Indonesia's independence. This area even has its government in the form of a kingdom. This condition is evidenced during the Dutch colonial period, where this area was divided into two regions, namely the Rokan Kanan and Rokan Kiri. Rokan Kanan region consisted of 3 kingdoms: the Tambusai Kingdom, Rambah Kingdom and the Kepenuhan Kingdom. In addition, the

Rokan Kiri region consisted of 2 kingdoms, namely Rokan IV Koto Kingdom and the Kunto Darussalam Kingdom, which added to the Ujung Batu area. Because this kingdom has five (5) kings, it is called the five (Lima) Luhak.

Rokan Hulu has an immense historical journey in its progress, and all of it was pioneered by Islam. Rokan Hulu has famous figures who are known to this day, among figures who are quite phenomenal and are remembered by the Riau and National people and even ASEAN, such as Tuanku Tambusai, Sultan Zainal Abidinayah and Tuanku Syekh Abdul Wahab Rokan. Tuanku Tambusai has been named a National Hero. Sultan Abidinayah is becoming a National Hero, while Syeh Abdul Wahab Rokan, born in Rantau Binuang Sakti (now in Kepenuhan district), is a recognized Suluk figure in Southeast Asia who developed Suluk until the end of his life. Furthermore, he promulgated Suluk in Babussalam Langkat, North Sumatra. It still has successor students, including in Rokan Hulu itself. Unlike gender, race, or nationality, which are one identity category, places contain symbols of many different social classes and personal meanings and represent and sustain identity on different levels and dimensions (Hauge, 2007).

From the historical journey described above, the purpose of establishing the predicate of Rokan Hulu Negeri Seribu Suluk is to provide a slogan, a distinctive predicate for Rokan Hulu Regency. Moreover, it is based on the history of practising strong values by carrying out a religious tradition from generation to generation and preserving history, traditions Islam which is juxtaposed with Malay traditional values which are thick and open and accept various diversity and differences. In addition to playing a role in maintaining a place, the identity of a place is also a slogan to create a place (Peng et al., 2020). Besides that, the purpose of establishing the predicate of Rokan Hulu Negeri Seribu Suluk is to realize the predicate or slogan of Rokan Hulu Regency based on identity and personality as the basis for noble values that are used as guidelines in society and government. Realizing a religious society always strives to increase faith and devotion to Allah SWT. Shaping the attitudes and behaviour of a person or society as a good person having noble character according to the guidance of religious teachings and shaping the attitudes and behaviour of a person or society to always purify themselves to the holy. The identity of a place consists not only of a material basis but also of a "mental sphere" (Knapp, 2006). A place's identity is formed after it reaches an established status both in the structure of the community space and in its social awareness (A. Paasi, 1991). From this point of view, Paasi (Anssi Paasi, n.d.) argues that subjective image and objective classification are two subcategories of place identity.

Another reason the predicate identity of the Negeri Seribu Suluk is used is as a form of appreciation for Malay culture to maintain and show the world that Rokan Hulu is rich in culture. Malay culture is closely related to Islam because almost all Malays in Rokan Hulu are Muslim. Therefore, all forms of regulation carried out by the government are also for achieving social welfare based on Islamic nature. Forming place identity is a process of creating regional boundaries, symbolism, and institutions (Anssi Paasi, 2003). Place awareness can be strengthened during the process. Perceptions and understandings of the

identity of a place are often interpreted in narratives or discourses. Discourse about place identity represents the claimant's memory of the past, a picture of the present, and often a future utopia (Anssi Paasi, 2001). As a subjective and enigmatic social construction, place identity is rarely discussed among individuals and groups in a place (Peng et al., 2020). People are unaware of place identity until their sense of place is threatened (Proshansky et al., 1983).

### *Place Identity of People*

The place identity of people is a strong emotional attachment to a particular place or environment (Ernawati, 2011; Fresque-Baxter & Armitage, 2012; Melnychuk & Gnatiuk, 2018; Peng et al., 2020; Zimmerbauer et al., 2012). It affects the way of judging, thinking and feeling interacting with the real world. This study used two perspectives in analyzing people's place of identity: external appearance and internal thoughts. Outward appearance is seen in the physical appearance and behaviour of the people tied to the place. Derived appearances and some activities inherited from previous people symbolize the outward appearance of a place. Muslim clothing following Syar'i provisions is one of the things that has become a culture and habit of the Malays in Riau Province, especially Rokan Hulu Regency. The identity that is built tries to give rise to Islamic characteristics. Rokan Hulu has several regulations that require state guards to perform congregational prayers in mosques and government-run programs such as evening readings for youth and children in this place. It shows how Islamic nuances of culture are developed in Rokan Hulu.

Another religious activity that symbolizes the characteristics of the Rokan Hulu Regency is Ratik Togak. Ratik Togak is a method used for Suluk congregations in inviting and giving the spirit of dhikr. It is one of the unique features of the Malay culture in this area. Another form of activity that symbolizes the outward appearance of Rokan Hulu is the Haul activity. Haul is to commemorate the birthday of Tuan Guru in every branch of the Thareqat group. Suluk is a way or method by Muslims to clean themselves physically and spiritually. They get guidance from someone called a Murshid (teacher/caliphate) in a certain or special place called Munosah, to purify themselves to get closer to those who Almighty Allah SWT. Some of these religious activities show that the identity described naturally leads to the outward appearance of the identity of a place.

Internal thoughts on the people's place identity are described in 2 forms: attitudes and behaviour. The attitude highlighted by the ROHUL community symbolizes how identity shapes them. The ROHUL society is guided to have a wise attitude representing the Malay society. In Rokan Hulu, society highly respects norms and politeness. Some of the rules established by the government accustom the public to be careful in doing things, such as determining business related to negative things is very gripped in Rokan Hulu, and this is regulated in the regional regulation of Rokan Hulu. For example, the prohibition for traders selling during the day of Ramadan is a rule that is consistently applied every year. If travellers visit Rokan Hulu during Ramadan, they can see that these rules are well implemented. Feelings are depicted by the role of the identity of Negeri

Seribu Suluk in colouring social life and activities with Islamic and cultural nuances.

#### *Place Identity of a Place*

The identity of a place ascribed person to a place is built to distinguish one place from another. Differences in place are associated with residents living inside or outside the area. The outward appearance of the identity of a place in the identity of Rokan Hulu Regency is described in 3 parts: 1) Physical form is the physical appearance/landscape that symbolizes the identity of a place. In this section, Rokan Hulu tries to construct identity with physical buildings such as the establishment of the Great Mosque of the Islamic Centre. Establishing this icon is one of the government's appreciation for the Islamic religion. The goal is to spur and create an impression that districts far from big cities can position themselves as areas with identity. The Ratik Togak Monument was also formed, which symbolizes the uniqueness of Rokan Hulu, rich in mystical and religious activities. The Ratik Togak monument symbolizes that Suluk is blooming in Rokan Hulu Regency. The government has provided maximum support to the people of Rokan Hulu in all fields, especially in order to preserve the religious Malay culture, the construction of the Suluk house infrastructure and several other infrastructures that symbolize Suluk was also formed based on assistance from the government. The main goal in forming this icon is to realize the identity known as Negeri Seribu Suluk.

Symbolic form, this element symbolically represents the identity of the Negeri Seribu Suluk, Rokan Hulu. Giving the predicate Negeri Seribu Suluk contained in PERDA No. 3 of 2018 symbolizes the symbolic element of the identity that is formed. Predicates are words or designations that are intended as guidelines, principles and demands of life to realize the identity of the people of Rokan Hulu. The purpose of determining the predicate as outlined in the PERDA is to become the basis for society to understand and make it happen so that it can be understood and foster public awareness to make it happen. Another symbolic form is shown by the rise of the Rokan Hulu Malay society who participates in the Suluk congregation to preserve their culture. Several kinds of activities have been mentioned above, symbolising the Suluk congregation. The naming of the area is nuanced with Malay culture, making it unique that other regions outside Rokan Hulu Regency do not have. The last thing that symbolizes the identity of Negeri Seribu Suluk is the Magrib Qur'an Movement. Maghrib reciting is an activity carried out by youth and women in Rokan Hulu Regency who carry out reciting activities together after sunset until Isha, which is an activity that was built in order to provoke the culture of reading the Qur'an for the lower generation. This activity has been implemented vigorously, but this culture has become less of today's reality due to the scour times.

Institutional form is an institution in the community or government agency that describes the surroundings of Negeri Seribu Suluk. There are indeed many organizations under culture and government in Rokan Hulu, ranging from government-formed organizations such as OPD (Organisasi Perangkat Daerah), which are engaged in organizing government affairs in the field of culture. The

rise of society's enthusiasm led to the formation of the organization. An institution that is not formed by the government but is in line with the government is LAMR (Lembaga Adat Melayu Riau). This institution has an institution that takes care of the Malay culture section in Riau. Lembaga Kerapatan Adat (LKR) is an institution that is almost the same as LAMR, but this only includes Malay society association institutions in Rokan Hulu. Organizations scattered in the Malay community of Rokan Hulu make the nuances of Islam in this area more elevated. Negeri Seribu Suluk is taken from the word Suluk, which, when interpreted physically, means a group of people who carry out activities that aim to get closer to Allah SWT. Suluk is a forum for Thareqat congregations, where this organization or school is an Islamic belief. The rise of Suluk and Thareqat in Rokan Hulu district helps form institutions to ensure the identity of Negeri Seribu Suluk.

The process of analyzing the place identity is from the external appearance and the internal appearance by exploring the subjective relationship between people and places. Inner thoughts on the identity of a place are seen from 2 elements, namely individual and collective perceptions. Individual perception in this study means that the society individually can represent the identity of Negeri Seribu Suluk. Based on studies that have been done on several elements, it is agreed that all sources consisting of various aspects agree on the existence of the identity and predicate of Negeri Seribu Suluk. Therefore, it can be realized that Negeri Seribu Suluk's identity has been formed and communicated through various things. Collective perception means that regional actors and several stakeholders determine the sustainability of the identity and predicate of the Negeri Seribu Suluk. The leader plays the most significant role and becomes the leading actor in the realization of identity and predicate with the existing social reality. The power holders have the key to infrastructure and regulations in improving the construction and communication of the problems of Negeri Seribu Suluk. Several stakeholders also play the same role but are far from being biased by the main actor. Customary and religious figures are one of the control holders of the identity of Negeri Seribu Suluk in Rokan Hulu. So far, several elements are still working together to realize the construction of identity in terms of symbols, icons, and a complete understanding of Negeri Seribu Suluk. The times have made culture and cultural construction decline, and the decline influences young people's interest in exploring culture properly. This decline in cultural interest poses a worse threat to Negeri Seribu Suluk's identity than Rokan Hulu. However, the lack of individual self-awareness about place identity does not discourage research on the assessment of place identity. Moreover, many articles place that identity can be measured qualitatively and quantitatively.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Place identity is considered important because it reflects the relationship between humans and a place. To make a place better in the contemporary world by increasing mobility and globalization, place identity is gradually being used as an instrument in today's world of development, such as spatial planning, place

marketing, and many more. The identity of Rokan Hulu as Negeri Seribu Suluk is also used as a predicate and slogan. Negeri Seribu Suluk was formed based on the Malay culture in Rokan Hulu, which means this area is rich in Islamic nuances. To strengthen this identity so that it will always be constructed and realized in the future, the government created PERDA No. 3 of 2018. The government has agreed on this identity because it appreciates the Malay culture in Riau. The identity developed in the upstream Rokan regency has been since 1999 since the district was inaugurated. The identity of the Negeri Seribu Suluk is constructed in all forms, starting from the social and physical aspects of the Regency. The identity of a person's place symbolizes that each identity can be reflected in the individual society in that place. The identity place ascribed to a person to a place is built to distinguish one place from another. Differences in place are associated with residents living inside or outside the place.

#### **FURTHER STUDY**

This study is an addition to the development of place identity theory. The study is not perfect because it only focuses on the background and the effects caused by place identity. The researcher hopes that further research can expand other research studies, both specific to the study and currently developing the theory of place identity.

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