



## The Rise and Fall of Sultanate Authorities in Post-Colonial Indonesia



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### [ *Abstract* ]

This research explores the fall of pre-independence Sultanates and its continued political, economic, and cultural influence in post-colonial Indonesia. By using qualitative and historical methods, this paper compares the Sultanates of Mataram in Yogyakarta and Al-Kadrie in Pontianak, which represent different historical paths supporting the struggle for independence during the mid-20th century. Sultan Hamid II of the Al-Kadrie was a supporter of federalism whereas Sultan Hamengkubowono IX of Yogyakarta was an advocate of the republican system. Eventually, Indonesia became a Republic, and the idea of federalism was sidelined, which led to the abolition of sultanates in the rise of the Indonesian nation-state, except for the Sultanate of Yogyakarta. After the 1998 Reform, the current development of democracy created political opportunities for the Al-Kadrie to reclaim its authority through engagement with various civic organizations. Meanwhile, the Sultanate of Yogyakarta faces

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internal friction because of succession concerns.

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## I . Introduction

There were about 300 Local Sultanates and Kingdoms across Indonesia before independence in the mid-1940s. However, the Sultanate of Yogyakarta in Java remains the only existing region with political authority and legitimacy over its territory.

This research attempts to understand the reason for this occurrence by performing historical and sociological observation of the Sultanates of Mataram in Yogyakarta and the Al-Kadrie in Pontianak, West Kalimantan. Mataram is the only surviving Sultanate-owned political authority as the Governor, with cultural legitimacy as the Sultan in the post-colonial Indonesian nation-state. Meanwhile, the Sultanate of Pontianak and hundreds of others lost authority and legitimacy in post-independence Indonesia until the *Reformasi* in 1998, which ended the Suharto regime. The *Reformasi* enabled many Sultanates to attempt reclaiming authority through the establishment of the national Sultanate forum, but the goals were not achieved.

Based on historical observations, this research argues that the continuity or discontinuity of the authority and legitimacy of a Sultanate after Indonesia's independence is rooted in agency and power relations with the colonial regime. For instance, Sultans Hamengkubowono IX of Mataram and Hamid II of Al-Kadrie were aristocrats and had maintained close relationships and partnerships with the colonial Dutch. However, the Sultan of Yogyakarta successfully formulated a firm engagement with the Republicans, i.e., Soekarno and Hatta, during the very crucial struggle for independence. Sultan Hamid II conversely joined the elite circle of the Republicans for various reasons ranging from personal barriers, ethnic sentiments, and political disagreements.

The 1998 *Reformasi* triggered the Pontianak Sultanate and others to reclaim their authority and legitimacy over the local areas

(Klinken 2007). This brought a dramatic change from centralization to decentralization in the social and political structure of the country. The *Reformasi* also reshaped the actors' formation, reflected by the previously suppressed figures under the New Order Regime, particularly the Islamists and socialists, who gained the political opportunity to influence state politics as well as parliament and executive office seats. For instance, the Islamists pushed hundreds of sharia laws in not less than 52 districts between 1999 to 2009 (Ikhwan 2018). In the District of Cianjur, West Java, the Islamists-supported candidate for Executive Head successfully won the local election and thus allowed the enforcement of sharia regulations from 2001 to 2006 (Ikhwan 2015).

Therefore, this research elaborates the structural and agency factors leading to a difference in the degree of Sultanate authority in the Indonesian nation-state era. It begins with a historical observation of the Mataram and Al-Kadrie Sultanates, and is followed by a discussion on the structure and capacity of the agency. Finally, a sociological view of the Sultanate movement is provided to reclaim authority and legitimacy amidst the opening opportunity within the democratizing social and political system in Indonesia.

## II . Literature Review

The formation of most Southeast Asian countries comprised three consecutive phases, namely chiefdom (or local principality), an ancient kingdom, and an imperial kingdom (Kulke 1986; 1990; 1991; 1993). Heine-Geldern (1956) described the process of state-building in Southeast Asia as a new cycle of state development, where the formulation of nation and modern-state would be parallel with the cosmology of religion. The end of the colonial era in Southeast Asia was marked by the transition, adoption, and acculturation of traditional kingship cultures into modern forms of statehood. Demographically, the kingdom and monarchy in this region are divided into two major religious spectrums, namely Buddhism and Islam. Buddhist Kingdoms flourished in Thailand, Cambodia,

Myanmar, and Laos, while Islamic Kingdoms or Sultanates thrived in Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Southern Thailand, and Southern Philippines. These Sultanates were formed by blending the traditions of Islam, local cultures, and ancient religions with modern forms of constitutional rules (Benda 1958; Reid 1984; Hefner 1997; Woodward 2011). According to Hefner (1997: 12), the endogenous “custom” and exogenous “Islam” in Southeast Asia imposed an artificial polarity on a dynamic relationship. For example, Benda (1958: 13) showed that the local culture in Java, specifically the central area, which is the heartland of the Mataram Sultanate, is the real victor and virtue of the people, rather than Islam. Javanese custom is more believed in the region compared to the Qur’an. Federspiel (2007: 86), stated that the emergence and expansion of Islam as well as the transformation of the ancient Kingdom to the Sultanate types in Southeast Asia since 1,300 A.D was driven by recognizing and hybridizing custom and locality to maintain and strengthen the loyalty during the transition. Based on these realities, Geertz (1971: 11) showed that the type of Islam in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, appropriates local culture rather than infiltrates religious civilization. Laffan (2003) also asserted that the process of expansion of Islam in Southeast Asia should be considered a process of negotiation between rulers, local culture, and Islamic scholars or the *ulamā’*.

Meanwhile, Sultanates in Southeast Asia are understudied. Hefner (1997: 8) stated that these realities occurred because Islam and the Southeast Asian Sultanates have long been “marginalized” by related research. Although the population of Muslims in Southeast Asian regions is more than 200,000,000 populations, with Indonesia having the highest number, most scholars discuss or only briefly mention other Muslim nations at the periphery of the Islamic world.

Most of the research on the Sultanates and their relationship focuses on Malaysia and Brunei, while Indonesia and the Philippines are largely ignored. Investigations of Sultanates in Indonesia mostly explore Aceh and Yogyakarta through historical and historiographical perspectives.

There are several reasons for this limited research in Indonesia. First, the majority of the country's sultanates, which are above 200, failed to maintain the power and authority after Indonesia's independence. Kershaw (2001) affirmed that this failure or total "discontinuity" was caused by the success of nationalists in framing the Sultanates as part of colonial puppets and the consequence of their status as the agency of the Dutch's colonial rule. According to Reid (1979) and Chauvel (2008), the revolutionary war insisting on Indonesia's independence challenged the Dutch colony as well as the local aristocracy.

Benda (1958) also reported that most Indonesian Sultanates were depicted as traditional symbols rather than religious authorities, despite being inspired by the Islamic cosmology. Ali (2016) also described the "bottleneck" relationship between the Sultanate, Muslim intellectuals, and colonialism in creating dependency and independency factors for promoting modernity in the country. He stated that the colonial bureaucracies in Indonesia, and even Malaysia, were willing to accommodate Sultanate authorities that were compatible with Islamic norms and values. Laffan (2003: 88) noted that the relationship between colonialism and the Sultanates should be viewed as the process of "Islamic pacification" created by the Dutch Colony as a way to maintain power. Locher-Scholten (2003: 26) defined the infiltration and incorporation of the Dutch colony into the Sultanate as a process of "preemption" and "contiguity" of the colony to the local society.

Ali (2016) indicated that Indonesian Muslim intellectuals inherently accepted the Sultanate authorities and simultaneously developed critical thinking in disseminating Islam and modernity. This led to the confrontation of discriminatory colonial policies as well as demands for 'the right' of the people. This led to the *ulamā'* connection between the Middle East and the *Jawi* in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Azra 2013; Noer 1982). Most of the traditional and modern Islamic movements or organizations in the East Indies concurrently emerged and became one of the epicentral agencies in dynamizing the social-political realities of society, thereby reducing the Sultanate's image as the representation of the religious symbol.

Unfortunately, majority of existing literature failed to analyze the disappearance of the Indonesian Sultanates' triumph, albeit the extensive connection and inspiration of the political bureaucracy of the modern Indonesian state by Javanese political culture. Sutherland (1979) described the success of the young Javanese *priyayi* in harnessing the *Ethische Politiek* of the Dutch to become a part of the "educated elite," "bureaucratic elite," and "political elite." These figures subsequently assumed roles in promoting the idea of decolonization as well as modern state and nationalism. Latif (2005: 115) named this type of Javanese as *Bangsawan Pikiran*, compared to the Old Javanese *priyayi*, who supported the colonialization and were called *Bangsawan Oesoel*. Reid (2011) viewed the Indonesian revolution, which is also constructed by *Bangsawan Pikiran*, was motivated by the purpose of new unity under the umbrella of a modern state rather than insisting on the "freedom" and "equality" in society.

Sutherland (1979) and Reid (2011) were solely concerned with the process of "Javanization bureaucracy." Their investigations were oblivious to the struggle of Sultanate institutions in other regions and the effect on determining the idea of the nation-state and the type of the modern state. The research on Sultanates in the Indonesian contemporary era by Klinken (2007) only examined the creation of opportunity for the Sultanate institution to engage in the local political contest in the implementation of regional autonomy. It failed to evaluate the impact of the Sultanate in redefining and reconstructing the history of the nation as a part of socio-political sources in returning power. Faucher (2005: 134) assumed that most of the Sultanate institutions were unsuccessful in regaining their authority in the regions. The reasons identified were ethnic sentiment and their "*rapport au passé*" mindset, which signifies how the people were forced to "identify themselves with the past rather than the past identifying them." However, the research disregarded the complexity of re-framing and re-narrating the socio-history created by the Sultanate itself.

Most of the literature above neglected to examine the Sultanate institution through a combination framework of historical and sociological perspectives. They only aimed to describe the

impact of the Sultanates' history on the sociological realities in the present times. Therefore, this research attempts to analyze the historical context to determine the position, power, and authority of the Sultanates in the independence and contemporary era by comparing the Sultanates of Yogyakarta and Pontianak.

### III. Historical Roots of Sultanates' Authority

#### 3.1. The formation of the Sultanate in Yogyakarta

A historical observation is necessary to understand the roots of the political authority and legitimacy possessed by the Sultanates of Yogyakarta and Pontianak in the era of the Indonesian nation-state. Although the Yogyakarta Sultanate originated from the Mataram Kingdom established in 1582, the current rule was a "political product" of the Giyanti agreement in 1755 between the Dutch and the conflicting Royal family (Ricklefs 2001). This caused the Sultanate to be divided into Surakarta and Ngayogyakarta respectively in Solo City, Central Java, and Yogyakarta Province. Since the Giyanti became effective, the Mataram rulers lost their substantial authority (Soemardjan 2009: 13-14, Carey 1986c: 8; Boomgaard 2004: 22-23). The agreement transformed the confrontational relationship with the Dutch into patronage, where the life and status of both Sultanates were determined (Ricklefs 2001; Brown 2003: 64). The Sultanate's lack of armament made the new relationship the right choice to maintain power (Woodward 2011). As a result, colonialism was mostly built through collaboration with the local elites (Benda 1965a; Boomgaard 2004; Reid 2011).

Despite being the Dutch's accomplice for centuries, the Sultanate of Yogyakarta still held a significant role in resisting the colonialists compared to the other Sultanates in Nusantara, which fell into their hands. For instance, Sultan Hamengkubuwono II fought against the Dutch rule (1729-1828) led by H.W. Deandels. The resistance was due to the Dutch policy that forced the Javanese into labor as well as the attempt to abolish the traditional ceremony and strip the elites of their authority. In 1810, 3200 troops were

deployed to assault the Yogyakarta Sultanate (Ricklefs 2001: 147; Carey 2008: 188). The Java War from 1825 to 1830, led by Prince Diponegoro, was also proof of the fight against colonialism, though the War was triggered by corruption amongst the Sultanate elites as well as injustice towards the local farmers and merchants (Carey 2014: 3). The critical historical event was the decision by Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX to terminate the political contract with the Dutch in 1940. The Sultanate of Yogyakarta became the primary supporter of Indonesian independence henceforth, and the most important part in modernizing the concept of economy and politics (Sutherland 1979; Lombard 1996a; Woodward 2011).

The description above shows the rampant cooptation phase by the Dutch toward Yogyakarta Sultanate. However, there is a historical artifact in each phase, illustrating a strong “social attachment” between the Keraton institution and the people, symbolized by the Sultan and his descendants. While reaching the era of independence, Keraton led the people’s struggle against the tormenting colonialism. The Sultan of Yogyakarta’s title, as described in *“Sampeyan Dalem Inggang Sinuwun Kanjeng Sultan Hamengku Buwana Senapati ing Alaga Abdur Rahman Sayidin Panatagama Kalifatullah,”* has also become the heart of Javanese culture. This means that the Sultan served as the main source that perpetuated the social, political, theological, and cultural values in Yogyakarta. This socio-historical context of “social attachment” and the “heart of the Javanese culture” has consolidated the legitimacy of cultural and political authority obtained by the Yogyakarta Sultan, who is also the Governor. The institution has become the “main actor” in formalizing the political or cultural symbol and managing diversity in order to avoid a destructive conflict between social groups.

Comparatively, this situation was the total opposite of Surakarta’s Sultanate. Both sultanates became the heart of Javanese culture and created space for members of various social groups, religions, ethnicity, ideology, etc., to emerge and concentrate in their respective regions. However, Surakarta’s Sultanate failed to manage local diversity due to the lack of cultural symbol legitimation and power. This led to a traumatic experience in Surakarta society, as the previous Sultanates tended to become colonialist accomplices. In



the 1910s, the proponents of various movements who echoed the idea of “justice” and “liberation,” such as Hadji Samanhoedi (1868-1956), Mas Marco Kartodikromo (1890-1935), and Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo (1886-1943), were not closely related to the Sultanate. Although Hadji Mohammad Misbah (1876-1926) was born in the Kauman neighborhood and was a descendant of Keraton’s religious official, these became the reasons for his resistant spirit. In 1919, Hadji Misbah was arrested by Dutch East Indies Government for his criticism of Pakubuwono X, who constantly defended the colonialist’s policies (Kartodirdjo 1982; Siraishi 1997). This signifies that the leaders of the resistance in Surakarta were nationalists who confronted colonialism. The role of the Sultanate at the beginning of the nation-state era was weakened by the Anti-Swapraja incident initiated by Tan Malaka in 1946. This movement successfully gathered various paramilitary groups and political organizations to eradicate the feudalism government as well as demand the annulment of the “Special Region” status given by the central government to Surakarta (Kartodirdjo 1982; Anderson 2006).

### **3.2. The Formation of the Sultanate in Pontianak**

The Al-Kadrie Sultanate was situated in Pontianak City, West Kalimantan. It was the youngest Islamic Sultanate in the world and was established in year 1771 by Syarif Abdurrahman Al-Kadrie, a descendant of South Yemen Hadhramaut. The Sultanate successfully transformed the area from swamps and rivers into a more prominent and populous city with various ethnic backgrounds, such as Malayan, Bugis, Arabic, and Chinese (Heidhues 1998: 276; Chambert-Loir 2011; Minza 2012: 65).

On July 5, 1779, the Al-Kadrie Sultanate signed an agreement of *Acte van Investure* with the VOC of Netherlands, which transformed Pontianak into the center of governance and economy of West Borneo (Gin 2011: 7). Unfortunately, it also strengthened the position of the colonial Dutch in the area through the establishment of the VOC headquarters representative and a military fortress (Listiana 2009).

One of the essences of *Acte van Investure*, dated July 5, 1779,

was as a starting point for the Dutch colonialists to strengthen their position in Pontianak. After the agreement, the colonialists easily reinforced their power by legalizing advanced contracts such as the agreements of January 28, 1819, August 16, 1819, December 16, 1819, December 16, 1822, October 14, 1823, September 14, 1856, August 22, 1872, June 23, 1911, and April 8, 1912 (Listiana 2009). The content of these agreements affirmed the status of special rights of the VOC colony to establish various colonial institutions, such as a headquarters representative and military fort fortress, alongside converting Pontianak into the capital city of West Borneo Sultanate. The VOC hegemony of power and legitimacy was followed by the loss of the Pontianak Sultanate's power over its territory and a restriction of access. As the result, it became an institution that only served public affairs and solely relied on the colonialist financial aid after losing its authority to levy taxes and other income (Heidhues 1998; Listiana 2009: 2; Enthoven 2013: 265).

The Pontianak Sultanate only had 8 Sultans, spanning 179 years, two months, and 13 days, from October 23, 1771 to January 5, 1950, with the end of the Sultan Hamid II's reign. Until Indonesia's independence, the region was strongly under the control of the Dutch East Indies (Firmanto 2010: 261).

The close relationship of the Sultanate with the Dutch resulted in frequent clashes with the locals, such as the Dayak, Chinese, and the Malaysians, whose economic-political interests were harmed (Enthoven 2013: 267). For instance, the conquest of the previously Chinese-controlled gold fields by the Sultanate was resisted by a Chinese alliance (Heidhues 1998: 288-289). The Dayak people also fought against their placement as second-class citizens and imposed targeted taxes (Tanasaldy 2007; Enthoven 2013: 272; Helliwell 2014: 193). This marginalization led to their exclusion from education and government positions, as compared to their fellow Malaysians (Tanasaldy 2012: 32).

The Sultanate of Pontianak also experienced a separation following an internal conflict, resulting in the establishment of new settlements, such as Kampung Banjar Serasan, Kampung Kapur, Kampung Tanjung Saleh, Jungkat, Kubu, and Kampung Tuan-Tuan.

Also, Syarif Abdullah as well as his Bugisnese and Malayan followers left Pontianak and went to Loloan area (Bali) (Al-Qadrie 2005b: 1-2; Usman 2010: 102).

Regardless of these events, the Sultanate maintained a very close relationship with the Dutch for several reasons. First, it was a strategy to avoid conflict with the colonialists that could potentially ruin the Sultanate institution. Second, there was a lack of military forces, soldiers, and armament. The Sultanate became more indirect and less confrontational towards the Dutch compared to the reign in Yogyakarta. Although Sultan Syarif Usman Al-Kadrie (1819-1855) tried to fight against their control, the resistance failed due to the lack of military power (Al-Qadrie 2005b: 18).

The alliance with the Dutch marginalized the Sultanate's territory and authority, indirectly turns the regime into a mere symbol of governance. Nevertheless, the Sultanate gained at least two advantages. First, it obtained an appropriation that significantly legitimized the symbolic status of the Sultan. Second, it enjoyed economic profits through the tax sharing system and allowances provided for serving as an accomplice to the Dutch. Finally, the Sultan and his family attained access to better education in Dutch schools and foreign Universities, particularly in the Netherlands.

The above account shows that the *Ngayogyakarta* Sultanate had a long history of resistance as well as compliance with the Dutch, which substantially strengthened its legitimacy to the people. However, the Al-Kadrie Sultanate maintained a close relationship with the colonialists, which undermined its legitimacy, particularly in the post-colonial period.

#### **IV. The Agency Factor: Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX and Sultan Hamid II**

It is important to examine the role of agency that led to the different paths of the Yogyakarta and Pontianak Sultanates. Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX of Yogyakarta was known as a reformist. He had successfully initiated open recruitment for Pamong Praja

(bureaucracy), abolished the Patih and Kawedanan positions, and cut off the budget for the Royal ceremony and ritual. Under Japanese colonialism, he negotiated to replace *Romusha* or forced labor with a popular program to develop the Selokan Mataram (Mataram Canal). This succeeded in saving the lives of the people from *Romusha* and assisted in irrigating thousands of rice-fields in the area (Soemardjan 2009: 47-67; Monfries 2007: 166-167).

Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX played a strategic and central role in the revolutionary movement for independence in the mid-20th century. He became a symbol of the traditional Javanese leadership as well as a prominent national proponent of the nation's freedom (Woodward 2010: 1). The Mandate of September 5" was also declared as an affirmation of the Sultanate's support for Indonesia. At that time, declarations of support were not common, as they maintained to have a close relationship with the colonialists. He also offered Yogyakarta to act as a temporary capital of the Republic following the Dutch military aggression on Jakarta. Therefore, the Sultanate was also responsible for paying the salaries of government officers and other financial expenditures (Carey 1986b; Darban et al. 1998: 49-50). This shows that the Sultanate of Yogyakarta continuously associated with Indonesia during the period of struggle for independence.

The situation of Sultan Hamid II of Pontianak (1913-1978) was different. The Sultan had a very close relationship with the Dutch as a graduate of their educational system. Also, the Sultan was raised by Miss Fox and Miss E.M. Curties despite being of Hadhramaut descent. He married Marie (Dina) van Delden, the daughter of Captain van Delden, a Dutch KNIL officer (Winardi 2012: 61). He graduated from the *Koninklijke Militaire Academie* (KMA) in Breda, Netherlands and was a secretary to the Queen of Wilhelmina. He held the military rank of Major-General (*Generaal-Majoor*) after being released from the Japanese Military Prison in 1945 for his involvement in the civilian-military movement of the *Koninklijk Nederlandsch Indisch Leger* (KNIL).

His appoint as sultan on October 29, 1945 was due to the support from the *Nederland Indische Civil Administration* (NICA).

He achieved the position after returning to Pontianak from the Netherlands when the regime was in crisis following the murder of sultanate family members, including Sultan Syarif Muhammad Al-Kadrie in Mandor in 1943-1944 (Soedarto 1989: 264; Gin 2011: 103; Tanasaldy 2012: 18). Syarif Thaha Al-Kadrie served as the Sultan for two-three weeks before being replaced by Sultan Hamid II, who gained support from the NICA.

However, the close association of Sultan Hamid II with the Dutch, particularly the NICA, triggered antipathy among Indonesian independence fighters. This was worsened by the fact that Sultan Syarif Thaha Al-Kadrie had a good relationship with the Republicans and the indigenous Dayak people. The use of the NICA currency also provoked massive rallies at Zwall Resident Office (Davidson 2009: 37; Soedarto 1989: 206-208).

Sultan Hamid II served as a State Representative of West Borneo. However, his position had very little implication in refining the relationship with the Republican figures because of the support from the NICA. He also confronted members of PPRI (Youth Movement to Support the Republic of Indonesia) after rejecting the proposal to fill his position since PPRI intended to maintain the independence of Indonesia. NICA responded to Sultan Hamid II's failure in cooperating with PPRI by forming the committee to change West Borneo governance and revitalize the existent local kingdom, provided they agreed to serve NICA (Soedarto 1989: 207-209). In May 1947, West Borneo was transformed into the Special District of West Borneo (DIKB), which was strongly under Dutch influence. This contradicted the position of the Yogyakarta Sultanate, which was fully committed to supporting the Republic (Soedarto 1989: 250; Poeze 2008). However, the DIKB was short-lived, as it was submitted to the Indonesian Republic and became the Office of the Resident under decree numbers 234/R and 235 R on 7 May 1950 (Riwut 1979: 35; Winardi 2012).

Both were schoolmates in KMA Breda and Rijkuniversiteit Leiden, and therefore had similar schooling. However, they possessed different mindsets regarding the independence of Indonesia (Persadja 1953: 98; Winardi 2012: 61). Sultan Hamid II was a very

Federalist-Pro-Colonialist, while Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX was a Unitarian-Republican.

The contestation between the two figures was sharpened by their ministerial positions. Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX served as the Minister of Defense, while Hamid II was merely a Minister of State *Zonder Portefeuille* (Without Portfolio) in charge of matters related to the state. Sultan Hamid II concerned the position of State Minister as less strategic and was entitled to serve as the Minister of Defense due to his military training and the former position of KNIL Colonel Office (Kahin 1959: 448-456; Monfries 2015: 213-214; Winardi 2012: 66-67). Meanwhile, Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX had no military background, causing Sultan Hamid II to view his appointment as the Minister of Defense as a political maneuver by the Republicans.

The disappointment with the Republican circle led to the perpetration of the Westerling incident by Sultan Hamid II, eventually deteriorating his relationship with other Republicans as well as the Al-Kadrie Sultanate and the newly created Indonesian State. Consequently, Sultan Hamid II was sentenced to jail, and Al-Kadrie was marginalized and excluded from the social and political system of Indonesia.

## V. State Formation and Its Implication on Sultanate Authority

The different networks and power relations between the Yogyakarta and Pontianak Sultanates during pre-independence Indonesia had a substantial impact on the rise and fall of the Sultanate authority. The idea of giving a Special status to Yogyakarta was proposed by Committee of Preparation of Indonesia's Independence (PPKI—*Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*). The central figure of the Sultanate was a member of PPKI. However, the inauguration of Special Status to Yogyakarta was met with hindrances, as there were objections and heated debates due to a traumatic memory of the possible '*despotisch*' and '*feodalisch*' political structure (Bahar et al. 1998; Kusuma (ed) 2009: 206-238). PPKI finally decided to award a special district to Yogyakarta and some other Sultanates in Java after

several debates and negotiations (Kusuma (ed) 2009: 506; Monfries 2007:167-168). This was manifested in Law Number 22 of 1948 and Law Number 3 of 1950 or Law Number 1 of 1957.

In addition, Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX served in top political positions during the early independence as the Minister of State (1946-1949), Ministry of Defense (1948-1950), Minister of Economic Coordinator, Finance and Industry (1966-1973), and the Vice President (1973-1978) (Carey 1986b; Lutfi et al. 2009). This indicates the definition of “Special District of Yogyakarta” contained in Law Number 22 of 1948 and Law Number 13 of 2012 refers to long before the birth of the Indonesian State.

Yogyakarta is presently the only Sultanate with the Special Status in the post-independence Indonesia, which enjoys the privilege of political authority, cultural symbol, and religious leadership, with a governorship, Sultan, and *Sayyidin Panatagama* positions, respectively. Meanwhile, more than 300 other Sultanates were systematically and forcefully subsumed within the State system, including those who actively fought against NICA and fully supported Indonesia’s independence, i.e., Luwu Sultanate (Agung 1996; ICG 2003; Roth 2007) and the Landak Sultanate (Soedarto 1989).

The State regime systematically undermined and delegitimized Sultanate institutions across archipelagic Indonesia. This was symbolized by several legal approaches through the issuance of Law Number 19 of 1965 and Law Number 5 of 1979, which imposed the modern bureaucratic system over the traditional one. The implementation of Law Number 5 of 1960 about the Basic Regulation of Agrarian Principles (UUPA) also privatized lands owned by the Sultanates and the people (Klinken 2007). Consequently, various Sultanate regulations became ineffective and were simply converted into cultural heritage and tourism objects (Kershaw 2001).

The Sultanate in West Borneo also began to lose its influence as the Dayak people gained electoral dominance during the regional election. Proof of this was the Regional Regulation about the Recognition and Protection of the Traditional Law (PPMHA—

*Peraturan Daerah tentang Pengakuan dan Perlindungan Masyarakat Hukum Adat*) that allowed the Dayak ethnicity to reclaim their land or *Tanah Ulayat*. Moreover, Landak Sultanate officially conferred an honorary title to Cornelis as the Governor of West Borneo and a prominent figure as a strategy to minimize the threat of Dayak legitimacy to the Sultanate. In this regard, Buchari A. Rahman, a former Mayor of Pontianak City and a prominent figure of Malay group commented that:

“...Nowadays they (Dayak community) are pushing in legalizing the PPMHA in order to recognize the customary right (*hak ulayat*) of the *Pribumi* (local society) which it just referred to Dayak peoples. However, the PPMHA draft would be a threat for the people who were labelling as “*pendatang*” (migrant), whereas the land owned by *Pendatang* could be easier in claiming by Dayak community as their customary land or the land of their ancestors. Currently, especially in the Provincial level, Dayak groups have succeeded in hegemonizing and dominating their powers in the executive and legislative levels. While the PPMHA draft approved, it would be a threat for Malay or other ethnic groups. In this case, even Malays (or even the Sultanate) also live and grow in this land (since tens of centuries ago), however in this situation, Malays also were categorized as *Pendatang*” (Interviewed with Buchari A. Rahman, Pontianak, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

## **VI. Reclaiming the Sultanate Authority in the Reformation Era**

The *Reformasi* created new opportunities and challenges for the Sultanates across Indonesia to reclaim political, social, economic, and cultural authority. The transformation of governance from the authoritarian-centralistic system to democratization-decentralization allowed local elites to synergize the customs with modern governance. It also facilitated the emergence of new aspirations to strengthen the local identity. As a result, about 70 Sultanates were revived after the reformation (Klinken 2007). The *Reformasi* provided a political momentum for the Sultanate to advocate for the traditional community, revive the previously marginalized



symbolism, and reinvent its authority, which was suppressed by the State regime for over seven decades (Klinken 2007: 151).

Meanwhile, the Yogyakarta and Pontianak Sultanates followed different paths to reclaim their authority amidst the changing political system of the *Reformasi* era. During the 2010s, the Sultanate of Yogyakarta opposed the proposal of the central government concerning a direct governorship election. This position has been held by the Sultans for decades since the independence of Indonesia after the conferment of the Special Status. In the *Reformasi* era, the central government viewed the privilege as obsolete following the amendment of the National Constitution (detik.com 26/11/2010).

It is important to note that the proposal was rejected by the Sultanate and a large number of the Yogyakarta people, as reflected by the mass gathering to support the Special Status. A referendum was also under threat if the proposal was passed (tempo.co 30/11/2010). The sultanate was considered at the heart of Javanese culture that it united people even during the massive social unrest of early independence following the Dutch aggression in 1947, as well as during the initial *Reformasi* era. Since independence, it has served as a symbol to unify the people. The Sultanate was a form of submission to the Republic and the national constitution of Indonesia, but it also generated self-identification among the people of Yogyakarta that they were somehow historically and culturally connected.

Pontianak took a different route to reclaim authority during the *Reformasi* era. First, the Sultanate attempted to rehabilitate the history of Sultan Hamid II by establishing the Foundation of Sultan Hamid II. This establishment collaborated with scholars, mainly historians, to prepare a proposal requesting a National Hero Award for the Sultan from the central government. The main reason was that Hamid II was framed for contributing to designing the Garuda Pancasila, the symbol of the nation (Davidson 2009: 152; Dimiyati et al. 2013).

Second, the Sultanate joined the Malayan Traditional Institution and Kinship (Lembayu). This was a strategic agenda as the networks with other Malayan Sultanates strengthened its

political relationship with the national government as well as the local Dayak ethnic group. In West Kalimantan, Malayan is the second largest ethnic group after Dayak (Davidson 2009: 152).

The above attempts to rejuvenate the authority of the Pontianak Sultanate were hindered by the local and central government. The Malayan Assembly of Culture and Tradition (MABM—*Majelis Adat Budaya Melayu*) was reluctant in welcoming the Sultanate as a part of its assembly. This was because of its history as a descendant of Hadhramaut, which is considered less or separate from the Malayan culture. The *Sayyid* or *Syarif* title attached to the Sultan and his family indicated a Hadhramis, rather than Malayan, origin. As discussed above, the Ulama discovered that Sultan Al-Kadrie originated from the Ḥaḍramawt of Yemen. The Hadhramis-related title situated the Sultanate and his family as an exclusive social group as they only married those who shared the *Syarif* (for a man) or *Syarifah* (for a woman) title (Riddell 1997; Freitag 2009; Smith 2009). The MABM also believed that the Pontianak Sultanate distanced and prevented Malaysians from partaking in its activities (Interviewed with Chairil Effendy, Pontianak, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016). Therefore, the appointment of a representative in the MABM committee by Sultan Abu Bakar Al-Kadrie has not generated any significant contributions to MABM or the Malayan culture. This became more apparent when the Sultanate was unable to mediate and resolve the ethnic conflicts between the Dayak and Malayan people in November and December 1999, as well as between the Malaysians and Maduranese in October 2000 (Salim 2005). Other incidents occurred at the Abdurrahman Sports Centre in June 2001, the conflict between the Islamic Defender Front (FPI) and Dayak in March 2012, alongside the disagreement among 205 Dayak and Aksi Bela Ulama citizens on 20 May 2017.

The description above shows the reason local elites in the country have been striving to gain “approval” and legitimacy from the Yogyakarta Sultanate upon the regional elections in the Special District. This is because they believed the Sultan’s blessing might help boost their votes. Meanwhile, the political elites from the Pontianak Sultanate descendant, such as Syarif Abdullah Al-Kadrie

(member of the regional representative council, 2014-2024) and Syarif Umar Al-Kadrie (Regent of Kayong, 2007-2008), tended to ignore their Sultanate symbol while campaigning. In fact, the internal conflict previously maintained in the Pontianak was affected, leading to the reduction of public sympathy for the Sultanate institution.

However, in the last decade the Sultanate of Yogyakarta has evolved an internal friction regarding its succession. According to the Article 18 of Law 13/2012 on Special Status of Yogyakarta, “the candidate of governor and vice are the citizen of Indonesia who fulfils the required document of CV that consists of educational background, working experience, siblings, wife, and children.” The term ‘wife’ has become a contentious issue as it implies that the candidate should be a male-only and thus discriminated against a female candidate. It is indeed politically contentious as the Sultan has daughters only. As a response to the Article 18, the Sultan gave a Speech on March 6, 2015 that proclaiming the supreme authority of the Sultan regarding the Sultanate succession, regardless of the gender issue (Dardias 2016). Then, on April 30, 2015, the Sultan amended his title and abolished the title of *Khalifatullah* (the Vicegerent of God on earth). In the following week, on May 5, 2015, the Sultan of Yogyakarta inaugurated his daughter with the new title of Gusti Kanjeng Ratu Hayuning Bawono Langgeng in Mataram, which replaced the previous title of Gusti Kanjeng Ratu Pembayun. According to the tradition of the Keraton, the title of *Mangkubumi* is a sign of the next crown inheritor. The orders were perceived by the sultan’s brothers as having violated the *Paugeran*—the traditional law of the Sultanate. There is no precedent for women to become sultan. The sultan’s brothers were of the belief that according to the *Paugeran* the crown should be inherited to the sultan’s oldest brother.

## VII. Conclusion

Based on the data above, the different degrees of convergence between various forms of political, economic, social, and cultural

authorities bestowed varying capacities to the Yogyakarta and the Pontianak Sultanates in creating local and national identity amongst the people. The difference is rooted in the historical positioning of the Sultanate elites regarding the actor circles in the mid-20th century or the era of the Indonesian nation-state. Although the Sultanate of Pontianak had an opportunity to reclaim its traditional authority in the local society in the Reformation era, this attempt is likely to fail. The failure was promoted by its historical contradiction, ethnic sentiments, and marginalization.

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### **Interviews**

- Interviewed with Buchari A. Rahman, Pontianak, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016.
- Interviewed with Chairil Effendy, Pontianak, July 31<sup>st</sup> 2016.
- Interviewed with Sultan Syarif Abu Bakar Al-Kadrie, Pontianak, July 26<sup>th</sup> 2016.
- Interviewed with Syarif, Pontianak, July 26<sup>th</sup> 2016.

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