



**Kata kunci:**

*jaringan; kekuasaan; politik dan penghulu adat.*

**Introduction**

Traditional power in modern political activities constantly incites the attention of scientists. This is due to the extensiveness of power legitimacy in traditional society which is often abused by power holders and utilized for political interests. In the contemporary context, the use of traditional power is often linked to activities of General Election (*Pemilihan Umum – Pemilu*) or Regional Election (*Pemilihan Kepala Daerah – Pilkada*) by involving the masses (Sulistiyanto & Erb, 2009). In Indonesia, the influence of traditional elites remains profound in the daily lives of the community. This becomes even more prevalent as the authority wielded by traditional elites in their communities tends to form a very strong bond of patronage subsequently viable to be used for political interests (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016: 4-6). As an example, Aspinall & Sukmajati emphasize that patronage strategy became the main option for every candidate running in the legislative election of 2014. They tended to use their informal networks through brokers in the constituencies to collect votes (2016: 5). The established relationship becomes a substantial part in the mobilization of power used for the political elite's interests. In line with this view, Sulistiyanto & Erb (2009) also found patronage tendencies throughout the electoral democracy process in Indonesia. The number of political elites utilizing traditional power networks through patronage patterns as one of the means in mobilizing support during the regional elections were quite substantial (cf. Prasad, 2016: 23-24).

To the pluralists, power is not actually owned by a particular class, such as the state. Power, in its general limitation, is also owned by the community and even by individuals in the community who interact on behalf of the

power vested in their selves. In order to achieve an understanding with other individuals in the community, power needs to be actualized into forms of strategies which will ultimately result in a mutual agreement among them (Foucault, 1982). This is also the case in the *penghulu adat* (customary chief) who acts on behalf of themselves and also on behalf of their status as local leaders of the cultural and customary institutions who assume certain roles and functions in the community.

In developing countries, traditional authorities represented by informal leaders indeed remain a necessity to the government. The involvement of informal leaders has strong connections to the limited capability of the government in encouraging community involvement in program implementation. Additionally, traditional communities are still bound with cultural value systems which can only be understood by the *penghulu adat*. Herein lies the government's difficulty in garnering public support, especially in implementing development programs. The government is fully aware that the influence these traditional leaders have remain relevant in the practice of modern democracy. Aside from having power in the community one leads, the *penghulu adat* also possess power networks which can be utilized for political interests. Nevertheless, the power of *penghulu adat* has actually undergone a transformation to becoming a part of modern power/authority. Particularly, in a number of cases, dominant power relations between the holder of traditional power and holder of modern power such as the government have been observed to occur.

The presence of *penghulu adat* and the power they wield have actually gained the attention of previous researchers. Graves (2010) and Hadler (2010) have explained the matter

although not in the context of practical politics utilization such as the regional election. Graves, for instance, has thoroughly stressed evidence showing colonial administration politics taking advantage of *penghulu adat* influence for their own interests in the Minangkabau region. The colonial administration had significant interest in the legitimacy owned by *penghulu* in the Minangkabau community in order to control the community through the power of *penghulu adat* they recognize. This is why maintaining the status quo of *penghulu* who were proponents of the colonial government was a substantial strategy for the Dutch colonial administration in Minangkabau. In a number of activities in the *nagari* (village), the recognized *penghulu* was even appointed as the head of a territorial political unit known as *kelarasan* (2010:75-85). *Kelarasan* is a government system conducted in the customary administration of Minangkabau which consists of two forms of *kelarasan* namely *bodi caniago* and *koto piliang*. The position of *laras* head (*lareh*) entailed a salary provided by the colonial administration hence binding the *penghulu adat* as the head of the *laras*.

According to Hadler (2010), the Dutch colonial government took advantage of the *nagari* head (*wali nagari*) to force communities in the *nagari* to grow coffee plant and imposed coffee tax on the Minangkabau community. Additionally, "In the 1860s, a more recent position of *penghulu suku rodi* was introduced to manage both the collection of coffee and the implementation of slave labor duties" (2010: 56). Observing this term, the ethnic *penghulu* indirectly became entrenched in political and administrative activities, particularly in strengthening the position of the reigning government at the time.

Contemporary development reiterates that the power of traditional authority has currently experienced a transformation in its leadership role and has adapted to global influences such as democratization process occurring in many countries (Hughes, 2000).

This phenomenon can also be observed in the implementation of *penghulu adat* power in West Sumatera. Even the regional election which is an important process of democratic consolidation has altered the behavior of *penghulu adat* in political activities at the regional level as of current. The power politics of *penghulu adat* no longer exists merely in socio-cultural spheres, but it touches on dimensions of politics and administration (Asrinaldi, 2016: 31). Therefore, a more in-depth study on the shift in the utilization of *penghulu adat's* political power and power networks is imperative, particularly in the effort of reconstructing the influence of *penghulu adat's* power network in activities of modern politics.

This article strives to explain the tendency of power utilization by *penghulu adat* as individuals exerting their power and functions in customary institutions, mainly in the regional election activities. The argument to be established in this study is that there is a utilization of power networks by political elites to mobilize support in the concurrent regional election of 2015 by involving *penghulu adat* in *nagari* (villages) throughout the West Sumatera Province. These power networks were formed by utilizing existing traditional authority derived from the personal capacity of the *penghulu adat*. Hence, there are two problems that will be explained in this article, namely: how was the *penghulu adat* power networks established in the administrative and political activities of the West Sumatera Province; and, how did the utilization of these power networks work in and out of their ethnic group.

## Methods

The analysis in this article is based on field study data by using a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was purposely chosen to explain the phenomenon regarding the utilization of traditional power networks by *penghulu adat* during the concurrent regional election held in West Sumatera. The character

of this descriptive qualitative research is to explain factual and realistic aspects in social, cultural and political activities of *penghulu adat* who tended to involve themselves in regional election activities due to them being involved by the regional head candidates or due to their own personal intent to be involved for particular goals.

The research data was gathered through in-depth interviews with sources that directly understand the subject matter such as interviews with regional head candidate involved in the concurrent regional election and the *penghulu adat* serving as a member of that candidate's campaign team. As much as 24 individuals were interviewed in this study as a basis to analyze the phenomenon. Some of the interview excerpts were included in the analysis section to strongly illustrate actual events occurring in the community. Data collection was conducted from the month of April until July of 2016 in several regions holding concurrent regional elections that are assumed to have been witness to intensive involvement of *penghulu adat* in places such as Solok Municipality, Dharmasraya Regency, Solok Regency, Tanah Datar Regency and West Sumatera Provincial level regional election. Additionally, the winning regional head candidates in these regions were also *penghulu adat* in their respective tribe and ethnic group. Therefore, the sociological background of the elected regional head candidate in the research area, who were also *penghulu adat*, undoubtedly influenced the formation of the *penghulu* power networks in their election. A triangulation process or data validity test was also employed in order to ascertain that the acquired data has valid reliability, that is by reviewing the relevance of concept and data sources obtained in the field. For triangulation of data sources, a number of interviews were also carried out with political party committees who were part of the regional head candidate campaign team.

## Discussion

Upon examination of the patronage relation established between patron and client in the community, it is indicative that the said relation demonstrates the presence of a dominant power wielded by a few individuals over that of many. This dominance can be observed through the behavior of a majority in a region acting in accordance to the interests of the group assuming the role of patron. Conceptually, "*Patron client relationship are legitimated by traditional conceptions of personalized power and a system of political deference embodied in religious and cultural values. Traditional patrimonial leaders supply security and protection that is remunerated by the followers' passive loyalty.*" (Deasy Simandjuntak, 2013: 99). It is not uncommon that this resource is utilized by the patron for the sake of their own political interest, or utilized by political elites having interest with the resources owned by the patron. For instance, in the local context of West Sumatera, the patronage relationship can be established from traditional authority owned by *penghulu adat* due to the network of power he wields.

The discussion in this section is elaborated into two parts, firstly, regarding the concept and utilization of *penghulu adat* power network in West Sumatera. A review of this concept is substantial in understanding the shift in the concept of *penghulu adat* power, which has been commonly known in the social life of *nagari* in West Sumatera, with the current practice of modern government. Subsequently, the construction of the concept of power through the formation of the *penghulu adat* power networks will be more easily identified. Secondly, the discussion regarding the formation of network and its utilization in the administrative and political processes. In the political context, the formation of the *penghulu adat* power network will be observed through the regional election process which involved them as well.



There are numerous studies looking into the influence of this primordialistic cultural relation on political activities. This culture of primordialism is even considered as the driving force in mobilization of the masses. This can happen because of the traditional leaders' dominance who have inherited power from a noble family, local elites or royal descendants. These noble group, local elites or royal descendants are commonly revered so that whatever their attitudes and views are, their followers will abide by them. This primordialism also restrengthens the patron-client relationship of communities in developing countries, particularly those living in the rural regions. It is often the case that their position is utilized to influence political decisions made by the community. Even the use of money or goods in general elections to mobilize support frequently occurs, as written by Wang (2014:14) that "...villagers' high participation rate can be due to either government mobilization (by paying money to villagers who vote) or by mobilization of village elite (by using the influence of personal relationships)."

In the Minangkabau community, the practice of patrimonialism can be observed from the position of *penghulu adat* in the *nagari*. The *penghulu adat* are usually the leaders of their tribes. As a leader, they are fully responsible not only to the nibling, but also in the use of the noble cultural legacy (Navis, 2015). The title of *penghulu* is generally inherited from generation to generation, but there are also other requirements which must be fulfilled in order to become a *penghulu* such as having righteous character, being intelligent and knowledgeable, honest, and fluent in speech (Idrus Hakimy, 2001: 7-10). This serves as the basis for *penghulu* to take actions that are subsequently followed and obeyed by the community he leads. The *penghulu* who has fulfilled these requirements would usually have strong legitimacy.

The influence of *penghulu's* traditional authority in the Minangkabau community has

long been known by many experts. Graves (2010: 31), for instance, explained that the position of *penghulu* in the tribe or ethnic group is inherited based on the matrilineal lineage. The *penghulu* is responsible to his clan, including in preserving inheritance and relations with other clans in the *nagari*. As elaborated by Benda-Beckmann & Benda-Beckmann (2013: 48) *penghulu* has "...the basic constituent units for economic and political organisation." Even so, this traditional authority of *penghulu* in West Sumatera is undergoing a shift due to the strong influence of modern power/authority. One of them being the strong interference of the government in conducting modern administrative functions to the lower level, namely in the *nagari* which consequently influences the power of *penghulu adat*. Nevertheless, under some conditions, the implementation of cultural and customary systems in each of the *nagari* is still given the attention they need so that the legitimacy of the *nagari* administrators are still maintained.

Actually, the study on the *penghulu's* traditional authority ownership has also been previously explained by Max Weber. In his book, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1947), Weber explained that the prevailing legitimacy in traditional authority will result in legitimacy from its followers because the said authority/power is derived from the belief in the sanctity of tradition which has been practiced for a long time in the community. The practiced tradition is believed to have the capacity to lead them to the desired objectives in life. The belief in traditional power originates from values the community have faith in and are practiced to become developing culture and customs. Through the actualization of cultural and customary values, a leader obtains legitimacy to lead the community.

The power legitimacy of *penghulu adat* in Minangkabau is generally derived from customs and culture that serve as a guide for the community. In the Minangkabau tradition, the *penghulu* are men who are descendants

from the mother's ancestry (matrilineal). In the mother's lineage, he is the mother's brother who becomes the *mamak* (uncle) to the mother's children (Graves, 2007). This is why in the Minangkabau culture "the leadership of the tribe and group in the community belongs to the *mamak*. The definition of *mamak* is literally the mother's brother. Even sociologically speaking, all men of older generations are *mamak*" (Navis, 2015: 130). It is in the hands of the *penghulu* that all decisions relating to *sako*, *pusako* and activities of the children and nibling in the clan are considered. Indeed, at glance, it seems that *penghulu* has quite a substantial power in the Minangkabau ethnic group. However, the power wielded in the hands of *penghulu* certainly cannot be exerted to his heart's content. Particularly because in the *penghulu's* exercise of power, the philosophy of *adat nan sabana adat* (true custom/norm), that is "*Adat Bersendikan Syarak, Syarak Bersendikan Kitabullah*" (custom is based on sharia, whilst sharia is based on the Holy Quran), becomes the indisputable main guide to lead.

Although the power of *penghulu adat* is legitimized by values of custom and culture, in practice and its development the *penghulu's* power could also wax and wane. This is in line of what has been revealed by Irwan Prayitno Datuak Bandaro Basa—the *penghulu* of Tanjung Kenagarian Pauh IX clan, who is also the elected Governor of West Sumatera in the concurrent regional election. In his opinion "the rise in customary power is closely related to the network owned by a *penghulu* whether he uses customary power, personal relations and other social relations in the community."<sup>2</sup> Particularly when in his daily life, the *penghulu* has broad social and cultural relations in other tribes and clans in the *nagari*. This is in accordance to the essence of power as Foucault (1982) explained that power has a relational dimension between actors. Every

relation between the actors will produce power in real life. That would also be the case when we observe the power of *penghulu adat* wherein the power they possess is not only imbued in the *penghulu's* self but also in the relations that are established because of the power vested upon him. As an example is the power formed between the *penghulu adat* and the regional government. In order to understand their relationship, we must be aware that there is power which mutually influences and supports one another. But, specifically for *penghulu adat*, as long as that power/authority is used for the interest of their ethnic group and community with a righteous objective, the legitimacy of the *penghulu's* power will see an increase. On the contrary, the *penghulu's* power legitimacy will cease to be if it were merely used for his own self interest. As a result, the advice and opinion of the *penghulu* would no longer be heard by his community and tribe. In the most extreme cases, the *penghulu* would not be involved in the decision making process of consultation assembly held by his people. On the other hand, the nibling who are the *penghulu's* responsibility to begin with would no longer seek his advice and opinion, especially regarding issues or problems they encounter.<sup>3</sup>

In the modern context, the spread of *penghulu adat's* legitimacy to power in the Minangkabau customary life has also been influenced by its surrounding environment. Particularly with the advent of modernization which is signified by progress in knowledge and technology which impacted on the existence of *penghulu adat*. This means that mastery over knowledge and technology is also an inseparable part in strengthening *penghulu adat's* legitimacy to power in Minangkabau. It is often the case that a *penghulu's* power will rise in stature and influence if he were to possess high competency in knowledge. This is because the

<sup>2</sup> Interview conducted on June 25, 2015 at the governor's residence.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Marlon Martua Datuak Rangkyo Mulie, campaign organizer for the elected regent/vice regent pairing of Dharmasraya, on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

social status of the *penghulu* in his community and clan would also gain more strength and significance (cf. Abdullah, T., 2009: 5-12). Contrarily, if the community he leads were to possess more advanced mastery of knowledge and technology than him, the presence of the *penghulu's* influence would indirectly be less substantial. This is the reality in the practice of *penghulu adat's* power. In line to this condition, Idrus Hakimy clarified that *penghulu* should possess "knowledge about the people he leads, *harto pusako*, about the *korong* kampung and origins as well as the *negari* [*nagari*]. Be knowledgeable about the sharia and customary law, and be capable of implementing them in resolving disputes occurring in the living surroundings of his people and *negari*" (2001: 26). Without all of the above, the existence of *penghulu* would merely be a symbolic one within the tribes and people of Minangkabau.

From another aspect, the existence of *penghulu adat* is also influenced by government policy, specifically following the issuance of Law No. 6 year 2014 on Village. Prior to this, the election system of *wali nagari* (village head) in West Sumatera had also been subject to change based on Law No. 32 year 2004 on Regional Government which was eventually followed by Governmental Regulation No. 72 year 2005 on Village. The *wali nagari* were no longer elected based on the *primus inter pares* principle because of their personal excellence being acknowledged by their community through a deliberation process but through community support in a direct election of *wali nagari*. The result of this direct election was that there were quite a lot of rivalries observed between the *penghulu adat* and *ninik mamak* to support *wali nagari* originating from their tribe or community. It was not seldom that even *penghulu adat* were tempted to participate in the *wali nagari* election because they are confident with the influence of their traditional authority that they consider influential due to the support of their nibling. These competitions frequently

brought about tensions which shook the solidity of power network in the *nagari*.

Thus, it is clear that the existence of *penghulu* in the community is very dependent on the utilization of the power network they wield. This network of power emerges as a form of implementation from their function as *penghulu* which originates from traditional authority acknowledged by their community. Even in the context of modern life, this traditional legitimacy is still required by government and political institutions for short term political interests. For instance, to a regional head candidate, the utilization of power network owned by *penghulu adat* directly relates to their access to the nibling of that tribe and group, particularly in the *nagari*. We can imagine the amount of support which can be acquired by a regional head candidate from the nibling of a *penghulu adat* in a *nagari*. Particularly if the mobilization of support carried out by the *penghulu adat* received full response from his nibling. Because of this, the traditional legitimacy possessed by *penghulu adat* often became the key to a regional head candidate's success in winning the regional election. Thus is also the case in the implementation of administrative functions, the assistance of *penghulu adat* becomes necessary to carry out the functions of political institutions and governments in the West Sumatera area.

### The Formation of *Penghulu Adat* Power Network

One of the strength *penghulu adat* wield is their network. The *penghulu's* power network is formed in their traditional community which concurrently affords them the legitimacy to take actions. Additionally, this network is also formed due to their informal relations to government authority/power. The power of *penghulu adat* in West Sumatera is a substantial necessity, particularly in assisting to resolve problems encountered by government administrators. Cases of nibling disputes



among *nagari* which is rooted in horizontal conflicts are commonly resolved through customary means involving the *penghulu*. As an example, the conflict of land boundary dispute between Nagari Muaro Pingai and Nagari Saning Baka in the Solok Regency which was leading to a riot was resolved through customary means by involving *penghulu adat* of the respective *nagari* and facilitated by the regent and local police force.<sup>4</sup>

Another example is the conflict between the people of *nagari* and the security apparatus regarding the case of illegal mining in Sijunjung Regency, South Solok Regency and Dharmasraya Regency which was also resolved through the involvement of *penghulu adat*. The mediation undertaken by the *penghulu adat* with the security force was successful due to the Head of Indonesian Police Regulation No. 3 2015 on Community Policing. In this case, the *penghulu adat* who also acted as the leader of the clan from the nibling who were in dispute strived to resolve the problem through negotiations with the police so it does not become a legal issue. The resolution process went smoothly in avoiding a more intense conflict between the *nagari* community and the local police.<sup>5</sup>

It is interesting to note that the existence of *penghulu adat* will in fact gain more significance due to the power network they wield. Hence, these power networks will serve as social and political capital for the *penghulu* in carrying out their cultural and customary functions as well as in fulfilling their own personal interests. It can subsequently be understood that these power networks were formed due to the personal capacity of *penghulu adat*. Their personal capacity is closely related to the resources they have such as the knowledge

and wealth they own. It is often the case that a *penghulu* with such network will obtain a noble stature among the life of his tribe and people.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, *penghulu adat* also serve as *mamak* that the nibling depend on, specifically, in the economic aspect. This results in the difficulty of nibling to refuse the *penghulu's* wish and refuse their request for support. This patron-client relationship frequently occurs and tends to be used for political interests. For example, in the context of regional election, the opinion of the winning *penghulu* who indeed does have authority in customary matters, knowledge, and economic resource tends to be heard. Their nibling won't even hesitate to ask which candidate they support in the general election (*Pemilu*) or regional election (*Pilkada*) held in the *nagari*. This is in line with the Minangkabau custom of *kamanakan saparintah mamak* (the nibling obeys the uncle). There were usually a lot of opportunities in which the *penghulu adat* disseminated support regarding the regional head candidate they choose to their nibling or to community figures in the *nagari*. These actions the *penghulu* took is in accordance to their function illustrated in the philosophy of *pai tampek batanyo, pulang tampek babarito* (when you leave you (for his advice), when you return you report (recent news and information)). On the contrary, if the *penghulu adat* did not have resources such as sufficient knowledge or control over customary land, the nibling would usually pay little attention to the *penghulu adat's* demands. There is, instead, a tendency for the *penghulu's* demands and actions to be criticized and evaluated by the nibling if it were deemed unsuitable to their interests.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, the formation of *penghulu adat* power network is a result of the traditional legitimacy they maintain. As already known, the *penghulu adat* are leaders of clans and tribes

<sup>4</sup> <https://issuu.com/haluan/docs/hln280113/4>, accessed on October 11, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> <http://harianhaluan.com/news/detail/44528/tambang-emas-ilegal-di-sumbar-ibarat-bom-waktu->, accessed on October 11, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Syamsu Rahim, Solok Regent for the 2010-2015 period in Padang on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with H. Rusli Khatib Sulaiman Head of the LKAAM Solok Municipality on April the 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

in a *nagari*. There are usually four or more clans with its respective *penghulu adat* in a *negari*. The interactions among the *penghulu adat* can strengthen the power network owned by a *penghulu adat*. It is in this context that power network becomes strengthened even further. The extent of kinship in each clan of the *nagari* has its own advantages for the *penghulu adat* for mobilization purposes on behalf of his clan's interests. The *penghulu adat* power network is seen as a means to strengthen the basis of political support in the general and regional elections (cf. Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016).

In fact, the mutual influence of power networks among *penghulu adat* also takes place in the *nagari*. Emotional proximity among *penghulu adat* in the *nagari* is also utilized to mutually support the interests of each *penghulu*. The relational pattern happening among them is indeed not claimed to be done on behalf of their respective clan and people. But, it is more of a closeness as peers in the *nagari* who jointly manage customs and culture in the *nagari*. The similarity in roles undertaken as *penghulu adat* and even similarity of interest in the *nagari* are the fundamental background in the formation of mutual collaboration among them. In reality, the pattern used by a *penghulu adat* in mobilizing the nibling will easily become a model for other *penghulu adat* to garner the same support from their own nibling. This is the impact of the ongoing interaction in the *penghulu adat* community found in the *nagari*.

The tendency to replicate is nothing new in traditional communities. The general idea is that the ethnic groups mutually adapt and adopt values, customs or behavior that are applied in their everyday lives. This is in line with Cohen's elaboration in his book Custom and Politics in Urban Africa:

"In the one case an ethnic group adjusts to the new social realities by adopting customs which are shared with other groups. In the

second case an ethnic group adjusts to the new realities by reorganizing its own traditional customs, or by developing new customs under traditional symbols, often using traditional norms and ideologies to enhance its distinctiveness within contemporary situation." (2004: 1)

In the highly dynamic customary community of *nagari*, the change in norms and values tends to occur, particularly in political activities they participate in. Along with the involvement of their *penghulu* in practical politics, this more or less has an influence in their perspective on the political reality currently occurring in the *nagari*. The existing government policies strengthen the political role of the people up till the village level through the election of village head or election of *wali nagari* in West Sumatera based on Law No.6 year 2014 on Village, and this has changed their past views and habits which seemed to have distanced themselves from political activities.

Particularly, the strengthening of the community's politics through the implementation of decentralization, political decentralization to be exact, is capable of providing space for the community to be involved in every available political activity. Even political parties are becoming more intense in broadening their political networks to the village or *nagari* level. This phenomenon extremely differs from the New Order policy which had indeed restrained political activities undertaken by the party up to the village level. This, however, was not applicable to the Golkar party which was the party in support of the New Order regime. The village head at the time was even a major actor in mobilizing the masses affiliated to Golkar (Jones, 2010: 345). Government policies in the political aspect are indirectly stipulated in the Village Law and the Regional Government Law which aims at raising political awareness of the community

as a prerequisite to quality local democratic life. Over the last three years, even political dynamics at the lowest level, such as the *nagari* in West Sumatera, have been undergoing rapid progress and development. This can be observed in their enthusiasm in following the extremely dynamic *wali nagari* (village head) election. In the practice of the *wali nagari* election, all attributes of power and traditional authority were employed to bring certain candidates to victory. While previously, attributes of the clan/tribe's traditional power/authority were only used to strengthen customary and cultural values within the confinement of the *nagari* area. Ever since the direct election of regional head had been carried out, its influence can be directly observed through the strengthening of the clan's political identity in various regions.

Thirdly, the formation of *penghulu* power network took place due to additional acknowledgement from the regional government to the position of *penghulu* who are considered to be capable of assisting the government. Although the appointment of *penghulu adat* falls under the mandate of the customary community, in a number of issues the influence of regional government in providing additional "legitimacy" to the *penghulu* is no less significant. The presence of *penghulu adat*, especially those that are recognized to be capable in assisting the implementation of government programs in the *nagari* will become a matter of importance to the regional administration. Upon observation of this reality, the regional government has indirectly provided recognition to the *penghulu adat* that are appointed by their tribe and clan in the *nagari*. Surely, the government's acknowledgement will also ease the *penghulu adat* in carrying out their functions among their tribes and people.<sup>8</sup> Particularly when the position of the *penghulu* is linked to the

implementation of development programs in the *nagari* which are included in the regional government's programs and activities. It is often the case that the assistance given to the *nagari* administration also involves the consideration of the *penghulu adat* in the *nagari*. Even the political lobbying undertaken by the *penghulu* becomes a substantial part of the political process in order to obtain assistance from the head of the region.

The close relationship between the *penghulu adat* and regional government is nothing new in the political context of Minangkabau. In the ethnical history of Minangkabau, the relationship between the *penghulu adat* and colonial authority had already been established, particularly to mutually maintain their respective interest. The Dutch colonial government did indeed utilize the influence of *penghulu adat* to strengthen their position in the *nagari* (Graves, 2010). Conversely, the relationship established with the Dutch colonial government was also utilized by the *penghulu adat* to broaden their influence in the community's activities.

During the colonial era, the *penghulu* of the *nagari* were chosen and selected by the colonial government to be appointed as spokespersons for the Dutch to the community in the *nagari* as well as to collect taxes from them. They are called the head *penghulu* by the Dutch with the main objective of assisting in the interest of the colonial administration. The appointment was aimed at facilitating the Dutch colonial interests in the *nagari* in implementing slave labor of planting coffee. Even so, the acknowledgement given by the Dutch colonial government also impacted the social mobility of the *penghulu adat* which consequently increased their access to wealth and power (Biezeveld, 2007: 209; also see Hadler, 2010: 56-57). Thus, the additional legitimacy provided to the *penghulu* had taken place for a long time with particular purposes.

This phenomenon can be compared to the current period, wherein the regional

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Zul Elfian Datuak Tianso, elected Mayor of Solok in the 2015 concurrent regional election, on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

government also provides recognition to the *penghulu adat*. As an example, the government's acknowledgement to the *penghulu adat* is given by appointing them as public officials in the scope of regional administration. It is often the case that the *penghulu adat* also work as State Civil Apparatus (*Aparat Sipil Negara – ASN*) and their position as ASN can be utilized by the regional head to support development programs in the regions. For example, by appointing them as echelon officials in the regional government, the regional head can indirectly intervene in the implementation of the *penghulu adat's* functions. As for the *penghulu adat* also serving as ASN, the acknowledgement to their authority will increasingly strengthen their position in the community. Particularly because the current development in the life of the people and of the nation following Indonesia's independence has reduced the power and authority of traditional figures seeking for alternative legitimacy, especially from the state.

“After independence local leaders whose authority had become partly based on positions provided by the national state had to find new ways to connect to the national centre. Traditional leadership is no longer sufficient to remain in power locally.” (Vel, 2008: 8)

This is why it is no surprise that *penghulu adat* serving as ASN intend to be politically affiliated during general or regional elections as a shortcut to accomplish their goal of obtaining legitimacy and restrengthening power and authority in their tribes and community. Although there are not many of them, ASN officials with a background as *penghulu adat* did indeed furtively involve themselves in regional elections by providing support to the regional head candidate that serves as their patron. Nevertheless, the support given by the ASN officials who were also *penghulu adat* was not too significant due to the limitation of

political wiggle room they have as stipulated by the restriction for ASN to engage in politics (Asrinaldi, 2016:61-65).

Fourthly, the formation of *penghulu adat* power network can also be understood from the environment of colleagues or peers they interact in. In the *nagari*, there are individuals possessing greater capabilities than other figures which leads to them being looked up as role models in social and cultural activities of the *nagari*. By having greater capacity, a person can even be appointed as *penghulu* even though he does not have direct lineage with the head of the *penghulu adat*. In this context, the title of *penghulu adat* can be given to someone who is considered to have contributed to developing the customs and culture of a tribe and community thus affording him with the title *sangsako*. The title of *sangsako* is indeed different to the title of *sako* which indicates direct lineage to the Minangkabau ethnic group. According to Idrus Hakimy (2001: 31), the title of *sangsako* is “a title of nobility given by the joint assembly through a consensus, and it is not inheritable as the *sako* title is.” This means that this title can be removed based on the joint decision of the council of elders in accordance to customs if a person were no longer considered worthy of bearing the title as it is said in the traditional philosophy that *sangsako pakai-mamakai, manuruik barieuh balabeh*. However, there is one concern regarding the matter, a *penghulu* with the title of *sangsako* has no relations whatsoever with the noble cultural legacy (*pusako tinggi*) which is the responsibility carried by *penghulu* afforded the title *sako*.

Even so, the involvement of *penghulu adat* with the title of *sangsako* tends to be carried out in order to successfully implement development programs in the government agenda. It is often the case that those given the title of *sangsako* are government officials considered to have assisted in the development of the *nagari* that afforded the title in the first place. Additionally, the title of *sangsako* is also

given to political leaders who participated in assisting and developing the Minangkabau custom and culture which consequently reserves them the honor to be afforded this title.

The formation of power networks through their peers also has an influence on the political activities in the tribes and communities. Particularly when the person given the title of *sangsako* is a public official or a political figure. The procession of bestowing the *sangsako* title is only carried out among *penghulu adat* of the tribes and communities. This means that the assembly held to reach a consensus on behalf of nibling is represented to the *penghulu adat* of tribes and communities in the *nagari*. That is why, in relation to the general and regional elections, the support expected by a person appointed as a *penghulu adat* with the title *sangsako* tends to be carried out among peers of *penghulu adat* who appointed the *penghulu* with the *sangsako* title. The reason for this being that the *penghulu adat* with the title of *sangsako* do not truly have direct access to nibling or communities in the *nagari*.

Upon observation of the above phenomenon, it is clear that the power network of *penghulu adat* who have direct access to mobilize nibling are those that have networks deriving from traditional authority; they have the personal capacity of *penghulu adat*; and their traditional existence is acknowledged by the regional government. Meanwhile, the power network derived from a peer of *penghulu adat* has very weak influence in the *nagari* community. Nevertheless, those who bear the title of *sasangko* afforded by their *penghulu adat* peers still hold substantial position, especially in strengthening the position of the *nagari* in the administrative and political processes. There are quite a number of them with the customary title of *sasangko* who wield influence in the political, economic, and social fields. The *nagari* community usually takes advantage of the position of the figure they had afforded the *sangsako* title to help them develop the *nagari*.

In a number of issues, the customary title of *sasangko* given to figures regarded to have contributed to the Minangkabau tribes and communities can indeed provide positive impact to the *nagari* in the form of assistance or protection. It is interesting to note that when the person given the title *sangsako* by the *nagari* run as a candidate in the general or regional elections, assistance from the *penghulu adat* will subsequently come, including mobilization of electoral support from the community in the *nagari* with the purpose of bringing the said candidate to victory. This exchange of resources is obviously a part of the unavoidable political patronage in the context of contemporary politics in the *nagari*. This is in line to what has been clarified by Hanif (2009: 330).

“A relationship signified with the provision of political and economic resources from the patron who usually wields personal power/ authority to the beneficiaries of ‘charity’ who provide their loyalty and political support.”

Upon observation of factual occurrences in numerous *nagari* in West Sumatera, the formation of *penghulu adat* power networks through traditional authority is not substantially supported by the personal capacity of the *penghulu adat*. As a result, the authoritative function of the customary leaders which should be implemented in the *nagari* becomes degraded. This is undoubtedly an issue for *penghulu adat* in carrying out their customary functions in the face of their nibling. Particularly because the ongoing modernization process also brings about progress in knowledge and technology which more or less has an impact on the nibling’s point of views regarding the *penghulu adat*’s traditional authority in the *nagari*. In general, the *penghulu adat* in Minangkabau remain dependant on traditional authority that is inherited through their lineage. Meanwhile, another source of legitimacy is also

**Table 1.**  
**Formation of *Penghulu Adat* Power Network and Its Implications**

Formation Process	Relations with the Community	Power Implications
Personal capacity	Bearing direct influence on the <i>nagari</i> community as their personal capacity is needed by the <i>nagari</i> community.	Mobilization process for political power is viable as the <i>penghulu adat</i> has strong influence in the community.
Traditional authority	Bearing influence on the community as the lineage of the <i>penghulu</i> with traditional authority is very strong in the tribe and community.	Mobilization of power is very dependent on the personal authority and capacity of the <i>penghulu adat</i> in the eyes of the nibling, particularly those with higher education level.
Strengthening of regional government legitimacy	Bearing quite a strong influence on the community as acknowledgement of the <i>penghulu</i> -ship is also given by the regional government, particularly in assisting the tasks of the regional government.	A strong access to the regional government will ease the mobilization of support from nibling and the tribe so it tends to be utilized for the interest of administrative and political activities, especially during period of general and regional elections.
Appointment by peers of <i>penghulu adat</i>	Bearing weak influence on the community. The influence of <i>penghulu</i> whose power network is formed through this process tends to utilize the <i>penghulu</i> network appointed through traditional authority because the people bestowing the customary title of <i>sasangko</i> are their peers in the traditional <i>penghulu adat</i> .	Direct access is in fact in the power of the <i>penghulu adat</i> with basis of traditional authority. This network tends to be utilized for administrative and political interests.

Source: Primary Data, 2016

necessary in order to strengthen this traditional authority, namely knowledge and technology which are in fact developing in the lives of their nibling. This is one of the reason why the influence of traditional authority in the life of the *nagari* community begins to decrease along with the constant progress of modernization.

Additionally, the power network phenomenon prevalent in the Minangkabau ethnic group is also strengthened by influences from outside of their tribe and community. This can be seen in the historical relationship of *penghulu adat* with the Dutch colony which instead strengthened the position of *penghulu adat* in carrying out their customary functions and the function of the colonial administration (Graves, 2010). Meanwhile, in the current modern context, the position of the *penghulu adat* is also very much determined by the acknowledgement of the regional government, especially in assisting the implementation of the administrative function in the region their tribes and community reside in. usually the *penghulu adat* that are recognized will

constantly be asked for their input, opinion and assistance in order to implement government programs. Even in the political context, as explained above, the influence of *penghulu adat* is also necessary to gain support from their nibling in the tribe and community.

Lately within the constellation of customary politics in West Sumatera, there is a tendency of bestowing the customary title of *sangsako* to individuals or figures considered to have contributed to the life of a tribe or clan in Minangkabau. Although the bestowing of this title of *sangsako* also adheres to the traditional ceremony attended by nibling of the tribe and clan providing it, there is little to almost no direct influence exerted upon the nibling. This honorary customary title is merely a political symbolization of a tribe and clan so that their existence remains acknowledged outside their own community. Thus, the influence of *penghulu* with the title *sasangko* is very low, particularly if the power network they form is used to mobilize support to their nibling in the *nagari*.

**Conclusion**



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