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Dynamics, Modality, and Commodification of Customary Title Bestowal in Local Political Communication in Gorontalo, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aimed at analyzing the commodification of identity politics through customary title bestowal (Pulanga) in local politics in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. This study referred to the critical approach with the critical ethnographic methodology. The data were obtained through in-depth interview with customary title recipients, customary stakeholders, and cultural observers, and gained from customary documents and news archives of the pros and cons of customary title bestowal from local mass media coverage in Gorontalo Province. Validity testing of the data was conducted through triangulation process. The politicization of customary title bestowal occurred because the process of customary title bestowal was not conducted transparently. This condition is exacerbated by the impression of commercialization of customary title by persons acting on behalf of customary institutions. Customary title was often used as a commodification of identity politics and modality in local political contestation. Custom must have authority in enforcing sanctions so that its role and function are not merely ceremonial in society.

Keywords: Customary Title, Gorontalo, Commodification of Identity Politics, Political Modality, Critical Ethnography

Introduction

The first congress of Indonesian indigenous people, known as the Congress of Indigenous People of the Archipelago (KMAN/*Kongres Masyarakat Adat Nasional*) I, March 1999 in Jakarta, could be considered as a channel of public distrust towards state management by the New Order government, which has governed for more than three decades. The congress attended by more than 200 people of national custom representatives formulated or proclaimed resistance to the “center of the state”, with the phrase “If the state does not recognize and understand us, we also do not know and recognize the state”, (Moniaga, 2007). The four pillars of the New Order government: National Unity, Centralization, Military Repression, and Economic Stability, caused dissatisfaction for the regions, especially the national indigenous peoples, so they asked to be recognized and heard.

As a continuation of KMAN I, in September 2003, more than one thousand representatives of Indigenous People's Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN/*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nasional*) held KMAN II, in Jakarta. If KMAN I was as a form of "proclamation" of the resistance of indigenous people to the elite of Soeharto; KMAN II was more asking for resolution of various problems having occurred and having no solution as expected in KMAN I. The second congress began to see other problems besides religious conflicts and local and regional dynamics, namely conflicts over natural resource management, including land conflicts, (Moniaga, 2007)

Many things triggered the "anger" of indigenous people of the archipelago in addition to the repression of the New Order government, (Van Klinken, 2007). In Van Klinken's point of view, interfaith tensions and local and regional problems merging with the repression of the New Order regime had led to tensions and encouraged local political turmoil after Soeharto. Klinken mentioned the example of the unresolved religious conflict in Maluku in the 1999-2002 periods as one of them.

The accumulation of communal, ethnic, customary, and religious roles coupled with post-Soeharto political conditions emerged to the spirit of the search for local political power. The surfaced political power that surfaced led to the desire in the regions to have local leaders (indigenous people) in order to conduct the control, especially over local economic resources, (Aspinal, 2003). Interaction between the wishes of local leaders both formal and informal to manage local economic resources on the one hand, and the dominant of the "center" role on the other hand, should not be ignored if they wanted to understand the context of contemporary local politics in Indonesia. However, the end of the New Order's rule was a new path for government life with a new face in Indonesia, from then onwards, (Biezeveld, 2007). Studies on the interaction of local custom and politics are still limited. Previous studies of local communities related to land conflicts, especially between local ethnic groups and migrants. Those studies revealed the lack of recognition of customary land ownership, further adding to the long list of land conflicts, (Fitzpatrick, 1997); (Slaats, 2000).

The transition of the centralistic to decentralization government regime is fresh air for the regions to show their customary identity. In subsequent developments, discussions on customary and political relations did not attract academic interest until the 1980s. Studies of the community before 1980s were more dominated by folklore, geographical, and less ethnographic studies, (Subono, 2017). These studies set Latin American region (Andean countries, such as Bolivia and Ecuador). Around the early 1990s until the early 2000s, local customs and communities began to become a concern in the contestation of positions concerned with the public interest. Customary circles were more willing to present themselves as the subject of decisive political power in the ongoing political processes, especially in the local context, (Subono, 2017).

The customary revival in local politics, in particular, was not far from the series with the end of the New Order. According to Davidson (Davidson, 2007), the customary revival in politics in Indonesia had been described by a number of writers and researchers in several regions in Indonesia, such as (Picard, 2005) about Bali, (Avonius, 2004) Lombok, (Roth, 2002) South Sulawesi, (Timmer, 2005) Papua or Irian Jaya, and the last West Sumatra (Benda, 2001). The essence of the writer's description was that custom, with all the unique attributes of the community, was fought for consideration in the formulation of local policies.

According to Benda (Benda, 2001) as the author of the *Nagari* concept wrote that West Sumatra government is the traditional name and political unit of Minangkabau Social-political organization since pre-colonial times and is now the lowest administrative unit in West Sumatra Province. Thus, *Nagari* bears dual functions and authority, namely becomes a unit of customary

law communities with political authority and customary rights to manage their natural resources and function as the lowest level of government with public authority and rights to manage their natural resources, (Noer, 2006). The study of customary title bestowal as the commodification of identity and modality in Gorontalo local politics is an entirely new study, because this study has never been conducted before. Besides, to understand the local political context, it would be difficult without trying to understand the local customs, (Biezeveld, 2007).

Reading the *Nagari* implementation in West Sumatra and observing Gorontalo or Hulonthalo would find similarities and differences. Its similarity is that Minangkabau and Gorontalo were established and recognized as 19 customary law areas in Indonesia. The division of customary law areas by Van Vollenhoven was that Minangkabau and Mentawai areas were determined as one customary law unit, while Gorontalo and Bolaang Mongondow were considered to be one customary law unit, (Dijk, 1971). As areas with a majority Muslim population, Minangkabau and Gorontalo were considered to have similarities in the local philosophy living in its community. Minangkabau people adhere to the philosophy of “Customary *basandi syarak, syaris basandi kitabullah*” as a customary reflection as a habit of Minang people based on the Al-Qur’n and Sunnah. Meanwhile Gorontalo with its customary philosophy of “Customary *bersendi syara, syara bersendi Kitabullah*”, which implies that between Islam and custom can complement each other. The difference between Minangkabau and Gorontalo custom lies in the authority held by the customary stakeholders, where Minangkabau customary stakeholders have authority in managing local natural resources, while the customary stakeholders in Gorontalo do not have authority in the management of natural resources.

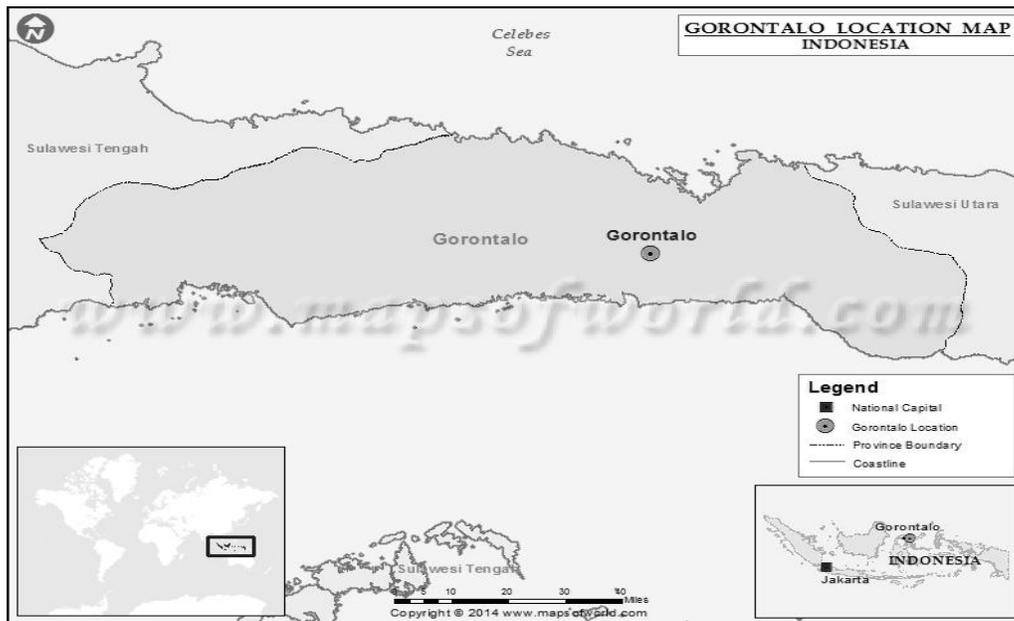


Figure 1:
Site of Study, Gorontalo Province

The philosophy of “Customary *bersendi syara, syara bersendi Kitabullah*” in Gorontalo shows that the interaction between custom and religion is a necessity. Customary stakeholders (*Baa'te*), carry out their functions to ensure that the values and practices of custom continue to exist in the community. However, positive laws in accordance with those in the unitary state of the

Republic of Indonesia remain as the main reference. In general, there are five customary processions that are still maintained in the traditions of Gorontalo people, namely, first, birth and youth procedures; second, marriage custom procedures; third, welcoming guests custom procedures; fourth, coronation and awarding customary titles/Pohutu Momulanga procedures; and fifth, funeral customs procedure, (Botutihe, 2003).

Pulanga adalah titel yang diberikan oleh pemangku adat (*bantayo pobo'ide*, kepada Pulanga is a title given by customary stakeholders (*bantayo pobo'ide*) to an official of his success in creating beneficial thing to the community or called *Ma O'Ilomata* (already has works). Works intended as *Ilomata*, such as making public roads, opening agricultural/paddy fields, making waterways, building mosques, etc. The intentions of giving Pulanga are: first, in order that an official has wisdom in his actions (*mo'odelo*), and second, to support the authority of an official as God's representative on earth, (Daulima F. d., 2004). Pulanga recipients, especially officials in government (regents/mayors), (deputy regents/deputy mayors), *Kadli*, *Wulea lo lipu* (sub-district head), and village heads. As for the requirements for Pulanga recipients are educated, wise, opinionated, and well-moral as a role model, (Botutihe, 2003).

Customary title bestowal (Pulanga) is interesting to be used as a study because it is related to the phenomenon of strengthening identity politics in Indonesia, after the New Order government. Pulanga bestowal always attracts people's attention and frequently causes polemics in society. In hindsight, especially after Gorontalo officially became a province in the era of autonomy, the political dynamics of the consideration of awarding Pulanga customary titles and its recipients had drawn much debate. The debate was mainly related to the criteria for awarding Pulanga customary title and how the emergence process of customary title bestowal itself. Besides that, the political dynamics of the formation of Gorontalo Provincial Customary Council strengthened by Regional Regulation Number 2 Year 2016 concerning the Implementation of Customary Institutions which also conferred customary titles had triggered a 'split' between the regency and city customary institutions in Gorontalo Province.

Based on the above study, the formulation of research questions that are considered capable of answering the aforementioned problems are:

1. How are Pulanga values as political modalities in government related to clean government?
2. How is political dynamics of Pulanga customary title bestowal in Gorontalo?
3. How is the commodification of identity politics in customary titles?

Method

This study included qualitative research. The best method to reveal the topic of this study was critical ethnographic method whose focus was on the discovery, interpretation, and application of local knowledge to be put into practice, not on testing hypotheses or results. Common elements in this tradition included partnerships between researchers and informants in relation to starting with research planning and interpretation, (Agar, 1996); (Kincheleo, 2000). Therefore, this study tried to find meaning, not cause and effect, focusing on process and context. In conducting this study, public discourse and behavior became the main attention. Data collection instrument was a researcher who did not try to avoid existing facts, while maintaining relationships with the community in an effort to obtain an *emik* or insider perspective. Critical Ethnographic Research was conducted by viewing that culture was used by certain powers to gain prestige, hegemony, privileges, and authority, (Creswell, 2007). Ethnographic research has ethical responsibilities for

injustice and efforts to achieve positive social change, (Brown, 2004); (Carspecken, 1996); (Hammersley, 1992); (Madison, 2005).

Obtaining the data to answer research questions, informants were determined and selected by using snowball sampling techniques, that is a sampling technique starting from small in number and the being told to choose its friends to be sampled, and so on. Therefore, the number of samples was getting more and more. Like a snowball rolling, it is getting bigger and bigger. Some of qualitative research use purposive and snowball samples, (Sugiyono, 2001). Initially, the informants were determined by using several criteria, namely people who truly understood Gorontalo custom, especially the ins and outs of Pulanga bestowal. Sources with the relevant criteria are called *baate* (customary stakeholders). With these criteria, two informants were selected to represent customary stakeholders of Gorontalo City and Limboto. Observing the polemic among customary stakeholders after the formation of Gorontalo Provincial Customary Council, this study also selected informants as representatives of Gorontalo Provincial Customary Council. To explore the meaning of customary titles (Pulanga), Pulanga title recipients and those who did not receive Pulanga customary titles were selected as informants. Total selected informants in the study were 12 informants.

The informant interview process was conducted by first taking an approach to convey the purpose of interview regarding customary title bestowal. Second, an agreement was made when the interview was conducted. The role of an informant was to find the next informant considered to understand the study context. Data collection through interviews was conducted with reference to the questions that have been previously designed by researchers. Interview material was also conducted by reconfirming the contents of mass media coverage obtained by researchers to informants, especially informants from customary stakeholders. Thus, mass media reports could be validated by credible sources. Likewise, information developed from discussion groups, especially in social media, was reconfirmed to informants who were the main sources in this study.

To test the validity of data and information obtained from interviews and documents, data validity was conducted by using triangulation technique which is the process of checking the truth of data or information from one party by confirming the data to other sources, such as to the second, third parties, and so on by using different methods. The purpose of triangulation is to compare information about the same things obtained from various parties, so that there is a guarantee about the level of data confidence. This method also prevents bias due to subjectivity and misinterpretation of researchers.

Results of Study

Values and Pulanga as Political Modality in Government

During the study process, the meaning or values behind Pulanga customary title bestowal in the local government in Gorontalo Province tried to be observed and understood. Efforts to explore Pulanga's values were carried out by conducting in-depth interviews with Pulanga recipients. There was no exact number of years when Pulanga customary title was given to figures who have contributed to Gorontalo. Pulanga customary title has been given to the Four Kings of Gorontalo, each of which has Four Great Works or *Ilomata Wopato*, (Musa, 1982) as below:

- a. King Ilahudu (1385-1427).
King Ilahudu successfully united 17 *Inula* (villages) scattered in the mountains into one kingdom.
- b. Matolodulakiki (1550-1585).

Matoladulakiki had a great work (*Ilomata*) which was to make Islam as the official religion of the kingdom. He also established a royal moral footing, namely customary *hula-hulaa to saraa, saraa hulaa-hulaa to customaryi* (customary *bersendi sara', sara' bersendi* customary), meaning that both custom and *sara*, could apply as long as one another did not contradicting.

c. King Eyato (1673-1679).

King Eyato's masterpiece (*Ilomata*) was to reconcile the Civil War between Limboto (Limutu) and Gorontalo (Hulonhalo) that had lasted for hundreds of years. Besides that, King Eyato also succeeded in formulating the customary philosophy of Gorontalo which reads "Customary *hula-hulaa to saraa, saraa hula-hulaa To Qur'ani*, (customary *bersendi sara', sara' bersendi Al Qur'an*)". This means that everything must be based on *sara'*, which comes from the Al Qur'an, so that customs contradicting it are declared invalid. What King Eyato done was a continuation of *Ilomata* Matolodulakiki (1550-1585).

d. Sultan Botutihe (1710-1757).

Sultan Botutihe's masterpiece (*Ilomata*) was to build Gorontalo city as the center of royal government according to a mature city planning, digging water channels to irrigate newly opened rice fields, building roads and markets, and even thinking of determining the burial complex for residents who died.

So far, there have been 65 people who received Pulanga customary title in Gorontalo Province. Most recipients of Pulanga customary titles had died. Even if they are still alive, most of them are already elderly, (Maksum, 2018). The exploration of Pulanga values was obtained from officials or former local and national officials who were willing to be interviewed, documents in the form of biographies of Pulanga recipient figures providing a deepening of Pulanga values. In his biography entitled *Harta Bumi Indonesia*, John Ario Katili (1929-2008), who was awarded Pulanga customary title as *Ti Tinelo Lahuwa* (a person who emits light illuminating the country) by Gorontalo customary stakeholders, considered that Pulanga given to him as a sign that he had 'facing the Qibla', a right direction, (Nusantara, 2007).

Since it is considered to make 'fence and direct' not to deviate in the course of his life, it takes a long time for someone to be willing and sincere to accept Pulanga customary title as explained by the informant, Rachmat. In the procession of giving Pulanga, a lot of advice to do and not to do should be delivered. All of those things were in the form of prayers sung by customary stakeholders. Those prayers delivered by customary stakeholders were actually full of wisdom and moral teachings that not only relate to relationships between people, but also with Allah SWT. As a figure of a successful young entrepreneur, the man who is still 36 years old and still enjoys his success were willing to receive a custom title when approached by customary stakeholders. He experienced inner turmoil before deciding to accept the customary title. He needed to ask for advice from more senior leaders who have received customary in Gorontalo. He viewed these figures as having foresight and understanding the meaning of customary title that will be given to him, so that he steadily accepted the customary title.

The recipient of the customary title *Ti Bulilango Hunggia* (state lighting giver), Rakhmat, has recently realized that behind the awarding of the customary title to him, there is a great responsibility to develop Gorontalo and also national area sincerely without sincerity. He must give grace to society by leaving legacy in every mandate given to him. Rakhmat gave an example when he was trusted to be Minister of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia in 2014-2015, he did many things, such as issuing Rules of Trade Ministry Number 06/M-Dag/Per/1/2015 concerning

restrictions on alcoholic drinks, (Aspasia, 2015). He also took a strict policy against the ‘mafia’ who played in this area ranging from the import of used clothing mafia, rice mafia, sugar mafia, to meat mafia. The customary title that he received from Gorontalo ancestors became his motivation to do positive activities wherever he was, including finally being replaced from his position as Minister of Trade. He did not make an issue with it, (Fajar, 2015).

To appreciate someone’s masterpiece (*Ilomata*) until he or she deserves to be given a customary title is indeed not easy, because it takes a process. Therefore, the customary title is usually given to an official as the level of governor, regent, mayor, or sub-district head. However, the results of this study indicate that some regional heads both who have been currently in office and those who have finished their term of office do not receive Pulanga customary titles, as for example the Mayor of Gorontalo 2008-2013, Adhan. He did not want to accept the Pulanga customary title, even though he had been approached by customary stakeholders. The reason for refusing this title was because he considered having heavy consequences to receive a customary title. He thought that if he was not able to maintain it, Pulanga customary title would be a kind of punishment or *Biitho*. The profile of Pulanga customary title recipients must be completely finished with their world affairs. Their words must be soothing. Additionally, they are no longer looking for benefits, for example, project fees obtained by utilizing their positions. Not surprisingly, it takes a long process before a customary title is given to someone.

Political Dynamics of Pulanga Customary Title Bestowal in Gorontalo

When examined carefully, the awarding of Pulanga customary title refers to the moral appreciation of someone’s performance. When Pulanga is used as a political tool, customary stakeholders do not want it happen. There are five basic principles so that a person is given a customary title, namely:

- a. *Pahawe*, or behavior. A prospective recipient of Pulanga customary title must show good behavior so that he or she can be a role model in both his or her behavior and words;
- b. *Wolyio*, temperament and character. His or her temperament and character or gestures, for example in religious and social life, must be tested. The recipient of Pulanga customary title must be Muslim;
- c. *Motonggolipu*. His or her performance in governance must be tested;
- d. *Motolongalaa*. He or she must be sociable in a community, family, and neighbor; and
- e. *Ilomata*. He or she must already have great works.

If those five characters are already visible, the customary stakeholders will offer customary respect. However, whether or not the offer of the customary holder is accepted, everything returns to the candidates of customary title recipients, whether he or she is willing or not. When the customary role is still a force controlling the government, Pulanga customary title bestowal is really conducted very carefully. Those five considerations of Pulanga bestowal criteria above are used as a reference since the customary title is basically not only a tribute to the leader, but also at the same time as a punishment. The customary title and position as both respect and punishment are explained by *Bathe Lo Hulonthalo*, Karim Laiya, who told in a moment before the king’s inauguration being canceled because he was unable to keep his word. The story was in the 17th century. The king who was waiting for the seconds of king’s inauguration found the horse to be ridden suffering a wound from being speared by someone. Finding his beloved horse wounded, the King spontaneously issued the words “*Wanu mo tapu’u, Pohutu’u*” (meaning: if I met the culprit, I would make him like this horse). The king’s harsh words were heard by the customary

stakeholders. After going through a process of deepening, searching for the truth of the king's words, then the *Bathe* held a customary session and decided to cancel the king's inauguration because he was unable to keep his words, (Zulhelmi, 2019)

The cancellation of the king's inauguration occurred after the death of the king Piola. Actually, the one who would substitute him as king was Bulolanawa. However, due to unable to control his words after seeing his horse hit by a spear, the *Baate*, especially *Baate Panggulo*, stated that they refused his inauguration. In a customary meeting by *Bantayo Poboide* (a kind of people's council), *Baate Panggulo* said “*Wambola Di;po Otunge, ma he molunge-lunge, in;po malita ma moloowo*” (meaning: while not horned, already horned, not yet being Lombok, already spicy). As a result of these protests, the next one who was appointed to be a king was Botutihe, (Tuloli, 2004).

There are many other dynamics in the process of customary title bestowal, especially after the era of regional autonomy, in which Gorontalo officially became a province, separated from North Sulawesi Province. The customary title bestowal as *Tapulu lo madala* (prince) to the first Gorontalo Governor, Fadel Muhammad, was one of example. In awarding Gorontalo customary titles, especially to officials, the titles given are only five types, namely *Tau'wa Lo Hunggia*, *Tau'wa Lo Madala*, *Tau'wa Lo Lahuwa*, *Tau'wa Lo Lingguwa*, and *Tau'wa Lo Data*, (Botutihe, 2003). No other names or titles is known and justified. The five customary titles can be rotated. The awarding of customary title with no pattern in Gorontalo customary practice was allegedly because certain individuals were looking for the motive of unilateral profit.

In 2008, Pulanga customary title bestowal ‘*Ti Tulutani Lo Toyunuta*’ which means the son of a nation or king who has served for generations to the Sultan of Yogyakarta, Sultan Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X also reaped a prolonged polemic in the midst of the community. Gorontalo student elements rejected the plan because it was considered to have political content. Their refusal occurred because they suspected that Fadel Muhammad intended to persuade the Sultan of Yogyakarta to go forward in the contents of 2009 Presidential Election, (Subari, 2008) As for the local Gorontalo leaders who received customary titles namely David Bobihoe as the recipient of customary title of *Tauwa Lo Lahuwa* and Iwan Bokings (the deceased) as the recipient of customary title of *Tauwa Lo Madala* asked government of Gorontalo province, in this case Governor Fadel Muhammad, to explain what the contribution (*Ilomata*) of the Sultan of Yogyakarta to Gorontalo is. The prominent thing was that the awarding of customary title should come from customary stakeholders as the results of the trial and the customary decision, not based on to the wishes of the leader. The politicization assumption was denied by Fadel. The awarding of customary title was merely to elevate Gorontalo culture to be more popular at the national level”, (Adit, 2008).

Fadel must accept customary sanctions from his “promise” to give a customary title to the Sultan of Yogyakarta without the approval of customary stakeholders. Fadel was fined Rp. 16 millions because he was considered to violate the awarding mechanism of customary title, namely promising to give customary title to the Sultan without going through customary stakeholder meetings first, (Adit, Zubair, 2008). The customary title bestowal to the Sultan of Yogyakarta could be given amidst the controversy that arises. The Sultan and his empress went to Gorontalo to receive a customary title on October 23, 2008. In the same day, a dialogue was held between Javanese people domiciled in Gorontalo and the Sultan. To obtain a complete view of the customary title to Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, the data were collected directly to Fadel Muhammad by the researcher. That customary title was given to elevate Gorontalo's image to the national level. However as the king of Java, the Sultan will always be highlighted by national media. With the publication of the Sultan's customary title, it was hoped that there would be a

positive image for Gorontalo. The next hope was that the customary title to the Sultan would strengthen cultural and business relations between the provinces of Gorontalo and Yogyakarta.

The political dynamics in each awarding of Pulanga customary title continues. In 2013, when Sjafrudin Mosii, who was the main Auditor of state finance VI BPK RI was awarded Pulanga customary title *Ti Molotuleteya Upango Lipu* meaning that the best son of Indonesia born in Gorontalo who was diligent and meticulously watched over state assets, also caused polemics. Something that was not revealed in the public was dismissal of *Bathe Lo Hulonthalo* (customary stakeholder) of Gorontalo City by the mayor of Gorontalo. In fact, with all the arising controversy that the auditor profession cannot be considered as the highest leader who has authority over land, water, fire, and wind, but it is limited to administrative tasks. The mayor as a leader in the customary area of Gorontalo City agreed to customary title. The problem was at the invitation on the day of the awarding of customary title, whose signature on the invitation letter was the governor and regent of Gorontalo. Whereas it should be the mayor and regent as it is usual so far. The mayor finally replaced *Bathe Lo Hulonthalo* because it was considered to violate the customary agreements that had been standardized. Many political dynamics ahead of the customary title bestowal continued to seek a solution. The customary council of Gorontalo Province initiated a forum to equalize the perception of customary title bestowal. The discussed things were the criteria for accepting customary title, punishment for revoking customary titles for those who violate custom, and the rules for awarding customary title for people who were not in Gorontalo, whether they would be awarded in Gorontalo or outside Gorontalo. Penalty revocation of customary title and criteria for recipients of customary titles has not yet reached a meeting point, (Azhar, 2016).

Actually the political dynamics of customary title bestowal can be resolved as long as there is a greatness of customary stakeholders' souls in Gorontalo Province. However, it is not easy. The presence of Provincial Customary Council, which was previously only known by the customary institutions of Gorontalo city (Hulonthalo) and Limboto Customary Institution (Limutu), has triggered unrest and dualism. Each party feels the most entitled to take care of customary in Gorontalo Province. This polemic results in the freezing of customary institutions and customary councils to seek the best solution mediated by government of Gorontalo Province, (Isam, 2018). The dualism of management which ended the freezing of Customary Institution by the government of Gorontalo Province was appreciated by the customary institution as a mistake. This is because the management of customary institution of Gorontalo Province has had the principle of legality starting from the provincial to the central government level. There was no governor, so that the customary institution was frozen. On the other hand, the freezing was considered as the middle and wisest way, so that there was no confusion in the community about what and who is actually credible to take care of customary. However, since the freezing conducted by the government of Gorontalo Province, no effort had been made to unite the existence of dualism.

Referring to and seeing the advice or *tahuda* of Gorontalo ancestors (*Tahuda Lo Mongopanggola*) in the past, it will be clearly seen that the Gorontalo custom is in fact standard. It only stays to carry out. The *Tahuda* says *Aadati Maa Dili Dilito* (custom has been patterned unconsciously), *Bolo Mopo'ayito* (just chasing), *Aadati Maa Hunti Huntingo* (custom has been patterned consciously), *Bolo Mopodembingo* (just carrying out), *Diduboli-Diduboli* (not anymore), *Tomali'a Limongoli* (changed), (Botutihe, 2003).

Commodification of Customary Title in Local Political Communication

To answer the research questions, data about someone after receiving Pulanga customary title was obtained by conducting in-depth interviews with the recipients of Pulanga customary title.

If material benefit was used as a reference, then Pulanga title recipient did not receive it. A lot of money to obtain Pulanga customary title was charged to the regional budget (APBD), which could reach Rp. 200 million for regional heads who are currently in office. When the customary title bestowal is held outside Gorontalo area, the required budget is far greater. It is this fact that justifying the recipients of Pulanga customary title generally comes from among established officials or businessmen. The figures who truly devoted themselves for example in the academic field to occupying the professorship position were almost never received Pulanga customary title because generally, academics do not have financial strength.

Does the awarding of customary title depend on who pays? According to *Baate Lo Hulonthalo* (customary staeholders) Gorontalo City, Karim Laya, and *Baate Lo Limutu*, AW Lihu, the notion of commercialization did not exist. Both of these *baates* claimed not to know how much money was for the one time of customary title bestowal and where the source came from. In general, the allocation of funds for customary title bestowal is clear, such as alms of customary stakeholders and the officials present, consumption, funds for the making of bestowal needs. Commercialization in the awarding of customary title was conducted by mode, that is, someone monitors and spies on someone who has the power including the power of capital, then delivering message to him that he will be given a customary title. If it is approved, the spy conveys and lobbies customary institutions to convene and determine the appropriate day for the bestowal. They are considered as customary title brokers, monitoring certain people who will be given customary titles.

The act of spying was conducted until outside Gorontalo area on the people who will be given the customary title and the place where he is considered to have 'become people'. The justification given for this is that Gorontalo's identity needs to be constantly attached to those who have already succeeded in becoming a successful person. This is a form of affirmation that no matter how successful a person is outside the area, he is noted as a son of Gorontalo. Some people doubt its effectiveness. However, in many cases, recipients of customary title felt to receive political legitimacy to do more broadly for Gorontalo. However, the Pulanga customary title will not be adequate if it is not supported by genuine sincere dedication to Gorontalo society. Some people thought that the Pulanga customary title bestowal is a form of strengthening identity politics. The informants did not dispute that opinion. However, it must be remembered that the customary title bestowal has been conducted since Gorontalo was still in the form of a kingdom. After becoming a province, we must show Gorontalo's identity, because all of society has long been regarded as Manado people.

The informant, Rakhmat, who spread many campaign props in the 2019 legislative election by wearing customary clothes when receiving customary title, denied his campaign as a form of commodification of customary title to influence Gorontalo voters. He asked to lower the billboard, if that would reduce customary authority. By highlighting his cultural identity and not his figure as a successful entrepreneur, Rachmat intended to introduce that he is the son of Gorontalo, no need to doubt his commitment to build Gorontalo sincerely and selflessly.

Recognizing the importance of customary title and customary support in the local electoral process, at the 2016 Gorontalo Governor Election, there was candidate of regional heads willing to pay to be given a customary title. However, due to the strong political nuance and the rejection of the recipients of existing customary title, the regional head politician was canceled to be given the customary title. The use of customary title for political purposes actually deviated from the purpose of giving customary because the customary title is only given because someone has been considered as a role model and a pattern of reference in the customary community of Gorontalo.

Given the title, a recipient of customary title has an honored position in Gorontalo community. With that customary title, a leader is not only an ordinary official, but also a leader in the full sense or as a caliph on earth. Unfortunately, preventing the politicization of customary title is difficult to prevent because sanctions from customary institutions do not exist.

Discussion

The study of political capital in social science is still being sharpened and the publication on political capital is far less than publication on symbolic capital, social capital, cultural capital, and economic capital. Political capital into a unity with other capital will be productive insofar as it has a relationship in the interests of mutual benefit and there will be no relationship if it cannot achieve interests or profits, (Nee, 2010). In this case, the relationship among political capital, social capital, symbolic capital, and cultural capital will accumulate conditionally. Nevertheless, political capital is human capital, which has similarities with social capital in human relations.

Political capital will strengthen the relationship between politicians and their constituents. Thus, good political capital can be seen from public agreement on the performance of politicians, or vice versa. If a politician does not have political capital, he or she will be rejected by their constituents. A politician gets political capital through a successful policy. However, the level of trust in a politician is temporary, while political capital is more durable in relation to constituents, (Nee, 2010). Good relations with constituents are built when a politician is able to appreciate aspirations and capitalize into a solution. At this point, it can be understood that political capital is very important for both parties: politicians and constituents. Analyzing political capital cannot be separated from the social context where a political transaction takes place.

Political capital is the utilization of all types of capital owned by a political actor or a political institution to produce favorable political actions and strengthen the position of the political actors or political institutions concerned. Four political markets affect the amount of political capital owned by a political actor or political institution. The first political market is general election because it is the basic instrument for electing leaders in a democratic system. The second political market is the formulation and implementation of public policies. The third one is the dynamics of relations and conflicts between political actors and political institutions in the formulation and implementation of public policies. The fourth one is the public opinion about the political actors or political institutions, (Nasir: 2009).

According to Olson (Olson, 2006), the following seven types of capital contribute to the progress of society:

- a. *Natural capital*
Natural capital consists of all the resources available to the community, such as water, air, land, biodiversity, and so on. Natural resources are abundant, but wisdom is needed in using them.
- b. *Cultural capital*
Cultural capital consists of symbols and languages, festivals, celebrations, and events. It is a shared identity that is part of identity, tradition, with which one understands. It can include a wide range of properties, such as art, education, and forms of language. Capital acts as a social relation contained in a system of exchange, and this term is extended to all forms of goods both material and symbolic, without distinction presenting itself as something rare and worthy to be sought in a particular social formation, (Bourdieu, 2010).
- c. *Human Capital*

Human capital includes individual attributes that give a person the ability to earn a living and improve their quality of life to strengthen society. Investment in human resources is as important as investment in the economy to improve society welfare. Human capital includes ideas, attitudes, willingness to participate, courage, and power to work together.

d. *Social Capital*

The concept of social capital arises from the idea that members of community may not be able to overcome the various problems encountered individually. There is a need for togetherness and good cooperation from all members of the public who are interested in overcoming the problem. The definition of capital is very broad and includes material things (which can have symbolic value) and cultural capital (which is defined as cultural value tastes and consumption patterns). Social capital is formed in a relationship between actors in the community or among the communities itself.

Social networking can be the greatest resource for the community. Individuals, groups, and communities will be more effective if they can be connected in a social network. A good social network in the community will facilitate the growth of knowledge and exchange of ideas, and mutual cooperation. More than that, social networking will form social cohesion in society. There are six dimensions of social cohesion, namely: (a) A sense of belonging, (b) High moral feelings, (c) Trust, (d) Consensus on shared goals, (e) mutual cooperation, and (f) Network cohesion between organizations, neighbors, and individuals in society, (Figueroa, 2003).

e. *Political capital*

Political capital influences how decisions are made in society and how outside resources enter the society. This capital is able to be owned by individuals or groups and based on organization, connection, vote acquisition, power, and the ability to influence the distribution of resources. Having political capital means having influence in society. Parties who have political capital are usually more successful in government because the principle of “Who you know, not what you know” still applies. Holding political office is only a small part of political capital in a society. Besides that, having political capital means someone has the ability to influence political opponents and strengthen its legitimacy. Government will lose political capital in the form of support and participation in development if the community feels a lack of attention to the vital needs of the community, (Putnam, 2000).

Political capital is unique because it is related to the power held by politicians. Thus, political capital is rooted in the institutional structure of the political order. When politicians transact with other politicians, the accumulation of political capital that they invest or have will easily influence other political actors and the existing political institutions. Additionally, this relationship usually lasts for a long time, (Coleman, 1994).

f. *Built Capital*

Built capital is the foundation for the community. It includes systems or ways in which other capitals can be used. This capital consists of roads, power plants, irrigation systems, buildings, and electronic communication networks and includes basic services, which enable individuals and businesses to become more productive.

g. *Financial Capital*

Financial capital frequently becomes the easiest capital to measure and can be used to measure how much capital is owned by the community. This capital is money used for

investment and consumption. Money is a tangible asset that can be measured; profit and loss that can be tracked; and it is easily converted into other types of assets.

Besides the aforementioned capitals, related to political dynamics, there is also symbolic capital that can be understood as the amount of legitimacy, reputation, and level of respect obtained by political actors or political institutions due to the done and undone political actions. Symbolic capital is derived from the capital when it is known and recognized through the category of compulsive perception. Symbolic power relations tend to reproduce and strengthen power relations which are structures in social space (field). Symbolic capital can be the result of the transformation of economic, social, and cultural capital into new forms, and has great power. The huge power of symbolic capital will create symbolic power, namely the power to “cult” to become sacred (legitimacy), (Bourdieu, 2010).

Political capital, social capital, economic capital, and symbolic capital are very important in politics to build trust in constituents. Political actors who are able to accumulate capital will have a higher level of income, (Nee, 2010); (Nee & Opper, 2010). The accumulation of political capital, social capital, economic capital, and symbolic capital is increasingly visible in local politics, in Indonesia, especially after the end of the New Order’s political power. Customary title bestowal in Gorontalo Province has led to the practice of commodification as a political modality in the context of local politics. Refining the criteria for receiving customary title is essential to avoid the impression of political transactions behind the process of awarding customary title.

The customary title in Gorontalo local politics can be understood from three sides. First, customary title is as a form of safeguarding to carry out the mandate as well as possible, especially the leaders/regional heads because if they abuse the trust, they will be subject to customary oaths. For some recipients of Pulanga customary title, they really feel that there is some kind of control over them, what is and is not allowed to be done. Second, customary title is as a form of respect for the achievements and performance of someone whose benefits are felt by the wider community. This is closely related to glorifying someone who is considered to have knowledge as promised by Allah SWT in the Qur’an surah Al Mujadillah verse 11. Third, customary title is as a form of political legitimacy to political actors.

As political legitimacy, a political actor is more confident and doubtless that he can be accepted by society. The customary title means political capital in the context of local politics. Those who accept customary titles are considered more trustworthy, they will not abuse their position. Although it must be understood that not all recipients of Pulanga customary title in Gorontalo want to compete in local contestation, it is equally important to understand that accepting customary title itself will not help if it is not followed by programs that touch the people to make choices. If the people are not sure, the people will not vote. Customary legitimacy has become quite important issue in the local political arena since the era of direct regional head elections, (Ambardi, 2016).

In a note (Ambardi, 2016), issues of customary, ethnicity, and indigenous people were only a few issues that were always dominant frequently often arising in the local political arena, especially for regions and areas having multi-ethnic character. At the same time, these issues divided the public to highlight and strengthen each other’s identity. Identity politics is deliberately built by local elites to maintain their power and influence in the local political arena. More than to maintain power, identity politics is practiced as a form of majority domination over minorities, (Sari, 2016). The aim is to gain power in the community. The awarding of Pulanga customary title in Gorontalo society has been made as a political identity in direct regional head elections. At this

point, the legitimacy of customary and customary title in Gorontalo Province began to lead to acts of commodification whose impacts were not good for the purity of customary itself.

Commodification of identity politics by using customary title as instruments began to be conducted frequently by local actors who fought in regional and legislative elections. However, the practice of commodifying customary title was conducted by two parties, namely customary stakeholders and local political actors. The customary leaders tried to find, contact, approach, and offer Pulanga customary title to political actors with the lure that customary title will bring political legitimacy. After receiving a customary title, the actors are capitalized into symbols that are highlighted in political contestation. All of these processes are certainly intended to influence and to increase electability as political marketing.

Commodification is rooted in Karl Marx's view of political economy. In Marxian terms, a product is the result of human labor, in the form of goods or services whose prices are then adjusted to prices in the market, (Marx, 1992). However, this is a scientific conceptualization which came to be called a commodity or "product" when it is transferred to another person, for whom it functions as a use value, through a medium of exchange, (Marx, 1992), as part of market orientation that is an indication of commodification process. Transfer and ownership aspects are very problematic in this case. According to Marx, commodification can be interpreted as an effort to prioritize the achievement of profits compared to other goals, (Burton, 2008). Commodification is a form of transformation of things that should be free from commercial elements into something that can be traded. It is used to describe the process by which something that has no economic value can be given value and how market value can replace other social values.

Marx considered that commodification occurs when economic value is assigned to something that was not previously considered in economic terms, for example ideas, identity, or gender. Therefore, commodification refers to the expansion of market trade from non-market areas and to treat things as if they were tradable commodities, (Nurhadi, 2009). Commodification is frequently criticized with the reasons that some things that should not be sold and should not be treated as if they were commodities. Customary in this sense is not only placed as a cultural marker of a society, but has also become a symbolic force, (Bourdieu, 2010). Customary as an instrument of symbolic strength has experienced an increase in prices and good value by the community towards the dominance of the government and especially by the local elite to win contestation in local political communication.

Based on the study above, it is very essential to discuss the role of customary institutions in their relations with local government in Gorontalo Province. This discussion is important to increase the role of customary not only for ceremonial, but also for adjusting to the dynamics of scientific development, social dynamics (governance), and political dynamics. The presence of customary in the community is one of the main foundations of the nation, namely cultural diversity and customs. Returning to customary is not only a social and political imperative, but also a necessity for civilization, as an effort to avoid the "emptiness" of identity and spirituality and as a result of forgetting and neglecting what the most important in the life of the archipelago for centuries is.

Therefore, customary stakeholders cannot grow into a profession that is only owned by certain people and is not designed with careful planning. Customary institutions should not only be filled by retired civil servant (ASN/*Aparatur Sipil Negara*) and then become customary stakeholders. It must start to think about how to certify customary stakeholders, though it is not known yet who will do the certification and what portfolio can be used as the basis for certification. However, the government must carry out mediation. Regional governments are not sufficient to

issue Regional Regulations on Customary Institutions. A team needs to think about designing the certification of customary stakeholders, considering all aspects of solidification in Gorontalo Province.

The certification of customary stakeholders can be one of solutions to produce professional customary stakeholders, working with upholding customary as exemplified by the Gorontalo ancestors *Lo Mongopanggola*. To make customary to be truly independent and respected in society, it is also necessary that customary becomes one of the mechanisms for resolving social problems emerging in the community. Enforcement of the social mechanism is the need for enforcement of customary rules and laws for criminal actions, such as gambling and cockfighting that do not need to be handled by the Police to be truly respected in the community.

Customary institutions in Gorontalo Province must be open and begin to be adaptive to the changing times, especially adjusting to the progress of science and technology. Customary must not be confined and closed down, as long as it does not violate the prevailing norms in society. Customary title bestowal requiring a great work (*Ilomata*) that can be seen or felt by the wider community must be rethought and reformulated. *Ilomata* is considered obsolete if it is only understood as having worked, for example building roads, buildings, irrigation channels, and so on. At present, by using fund allocation system from the regions to the village, development can be easily conducted as long as it is aspired by the community and its implementation can be accounted for.

The ability to build many things is a contribution rather than knowledge from various fields. With that knowledge, various innovations can be conducted, and its benefits can be felt by humans. Someone's expertise in a particular field of science has not been accommodated yet and used as the basis for the Pulanga customary title bestowal in Gorontalo Province. The customary title to John Ario Katili and B.J. Habibie was received when they became a high-ranking state official, that was the deputy chairman of People's Consultative Assembly (MPR/*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*) and the President of the Republic of Indonesia. Someone's intelligence, especially when it comes to obtain the status of professor should not escape the attention of customary institutions. Ingenuity and proficiency in a particular field of science must be made as *Ilomata* namely *Ilomata Motota*. Pulanga title recipients need to accommodate experts in certain fields of study, named *Ilomata Motota*.

Appreciation from the surrounding community is certainly obtained by the recipients of customary title, but the effect on the electoral is not too great. In the era of open democracy, the informants acknowledged that economic capital is very important to influence voters. That capital itself is not sufficient, it must be added to the face to face approach to the community. Everything must be conducted by politicians to communicate with the people. It is not only able to rely on capital closeness and custom symbols, but funds are also important to make 'concrete support'. It will probably be different from the situation. If the support to occupy a certain position is chosen by the leader or supervisor, customary title can be considered. However, in the era of direct democracy, that is no longer possible.

Concluision

The relationship among custom, politics, and Islam cannot be separated from the local government in Gorontalo Province. As an ancestral heritage, the values and customary messages existing in Gorontalo society are compatible with democratic values to create a clean government. However, not all exploration of customary values to create a clean government has been able to be implemented by local leaders (*olongia*).

The government and customary institutions must start planning, directing, and synergizing development programs to fit with customary values and habits that develop within the community to realize harmony, suitability, justice, and social welfare. The function of customary institutions needs to be improved as a means of controlling security, peace, harmony, and public order, especially for preventing moral problems and reconciling disputes that arise in the community.

Pulanga customary title is easy to be commodified in local politics because the criteria for receiving customary title frequently change. The relationship between the customary institution and the prospective customary title recipient must be transparent to avoid the alleged commercialization of customary. In order to break the relationship of customary 'commercialization', the customary institution supporting customary stakeholders must have resources, namely financial capital in conducting their duties. Certification can be a solution to obtain a profile of customary stakeholders who are responsible for and firm in conducting their duties in the meeting in Gorontalo Province.

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