



Hyper-centralization of Political Power and Fragmentation of Local Authority Networks in Banten (Indonesia)

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Speaker's Profile



After holding Master of Social Anthropology at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales of Paris, Gabriel Facal achieved his doctoral thesis in Aix-Marseille University as a member of the Institut de Recherches Asiatiques (IrAsia, Marseille) and under the supervision of Dr. Jean-Marc de Grave. He realized nine fieldworks for a total duration of thirty months in Southeast Asia.

His research is about the link between local authority structures and political institutions at the West of Java and the South of Sumatra (Indonesia). He mainly works on martial ritual initiation groups which gather hundred thousand of practitioners and the link of these groups with trans-regional parallel political networks. Since the fall of President Suharto's military regime and with the Indonesian decentralization initiated in 1998, these networks have reached an unrecorded politico-economic development. They have the tutelary of lobbying groups, women organizations, humanitarian, religious and youth associations. They encompass civil militias supported by army and police members.

Gabriel Facal pays particular attention to the discourses mobilized by these networks, which ones combine nationalism and entrepreneurship with regionalist and religious ideological referents. Currently, he is funded by Erasmus Mundus and hosted by Universiti Brunei Darussalam to do a postdoctoral research on trans-regional continuities of the martial art techniques in the Malay world.

Abstract

In Indonesia, the political reversals that have occurred since last October 2013 in the region of Banten (West of Java) still catch the attention of the mass media and the public. The main event on this process is the detention of Banten's governor, Atut Chosiyah, and her brother, Khaeri Wardhana. These two main political figures belong to a powerful family which plays a major role in the region since the President Suharto's regime in the 1970's. This family is reputed to have installed its power through connections with religious leaders, called *kiai*, and strongmen, called *jawara*. Based on ritual initiation and religious practices, networks of *kiai* and *jawara* form a local structure of authority which has played an intermediary role between local communities and national political institutions since Indonesia's independence in 1945.

With the Indonesian decentralization process initiated in 1998 and the accession of Banten at the province statute, the governor's family has fragmented these networks to center the alliances on kinship relations. The strategy of regional political hyper-centralization operates through local parliaments, lobbying groups and mass communication institutes. In this communication I will examine the discourses promoted by these organs to underline that the referents used are based upon a goal of ideological "de-territorialization" and "des-historicization". It will lead to consider what kind of political representation is proposed by the regional leaders and, in turn, how Bantenese citizens can present their expectations concerning political issues at the local level.