



The Persistence of Civil Militias in Banten and Lampung, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study focuses on how civil militias in Banten and Lampung do their persistence in society. Civil militias play significant role in society not only as being intermediaries between civil societies themselves and the government, but also as a mediator between the different political levels of society: In addition, the existence of martial arts groups give contributions as initiation bases for the activist masses. This study on civil militias also shows how political parallel networks compete for power, beyond the parties and political chairs.

Keywords: civil militias; vigilante groups; martial arts; politics; political Islam; violence; *Reformasi*; Indonesia.

Introduction

In Indonesia², many anthropological and socio-political specialists have reported that nowadays in most provinces, society is deeply structured by a number of more or less institutionalized paramilitary, criminal and vigilante groups³. Other kinds of semi-formal groups also interact and compete in the political scene, like lobby-style political intermediaries⁴ and various types of local strongmen networks⁵. Regional and national-scales oligarchies seem to be at the center of these groups' resilience and constraints⁶, but the elites who happen to be labeled as "reformist" also have to deal with these actors, due to their involvement in a wide semi-institutionalized system of arrangements and

backings⁷. These numerous forces form a large power sphere that involves altogether political power, economical influence, religious authority, and social leadership. Therefore, power conceptions and power modes of exercise represent complex questions that need to be investigated both by detailed local ethnographies and by extended comparative studies.

Another significant aspect is the power structures' delimitation and their transformation according to the sociopolitical evolutions. Indeed, in Indonesia, the historical national construction process has been marked by a contrasted local intertwining between the semi-formal power actors, previously evoked, and the State officers, private entrepreneurs, and former army members⁷. For example, during the so-called New Order era (1966-1998) – under the regime of President Suharto –, the State fostered and made good use of gangs and criminal groups as local intermediaries. They imposed physical force on political fields where State action lacked of legitimacy that is to say in spheres situated at the fringes of legality⁸. Street-level strongmen (with vernacular denominations, like *gali*, *bromocorah* or *preman*) were allowed to carry out their activities, such as protecting rackets and controlling over particular localized sectors of the economy, in return of a profits' cut that would be distributed through the various levels of the state bureaucracy.

Since the period called Reformasi, which began in 1998, a decentralization and democratization process has been initiated with some significant advances⁹. Nevertheless, according to Ian Douglas Wilson¹⁰, this was at the beginning accompanied by an upsurge in violence, coercion and extortion carried out by organizations including members of paramilitary, criminals and vigilante groups. Vedi Hadiz¹¹ also underlined that 'political gangsters' and vigilantes were the major beneficiaries of the decentralization reforms. This process also resulted into a more fragmented intertwining of the State with informal "constellation of power"¹⁰. Therefore, civil society and political institutions are intermediated by numerous organizations that form an ever changing and complex power panorama, according to the national political evolutions and the regional dynamics.

The western part of Java, particularly Banten province, and the Sumatra's southern region, Lampung, underwent deep transformations endured by informal political networks since their access to provincial autonomy status,

respectively in 2000 and 1964. These networks are marked by a partial institutionalization, through the integration of some of their elements into State politico-economical management's mechanisms. Their leaders have for example gained positions as governors, prefects, mayors, deputies, senators, as much as in the state administration and economical organs, like the Commerce and industry chamber (*Kamar dagang dan industry/Kadin*). They also mobilized new ideological repertoires, by adjusting them to the new flux and to the recent access to information and communication technologies¹¹. By its geographical position between Jakarta and Sumatra, Banten is a very strategic region for Indonesian development projects, while Lampung, as a transmigration area, has numerous and complex constellations of authority networks. Therefore, a comparative study is interesting to carry out in regard to the geographical proximity of the regions, the shared history, the prevalence of informal political networks and also the significant organization of power in both provinces.

There is a vast amount of social science research about the semi-legal networks' State entrenchment. But the inclusion of these groups into wider political spheres situated at various levels of both State and society is less documented. I will try to show that in Banten's and Lampung's cases, the power set in which social and political elite evolve encompasses altogether State institutions, politico-economic and social organizations, as well as local authority institutions defined here as encompassing local religious personalities (*ustadz, ulama, syekh* and *kiai*) and ritual initiation – including the therapeutics and fighting techniques of the martial arts (*silat*) and invulnerability practices (*debus*)¹² – masters (*guru* and *sesepuh*). This extended set of sociopolitical actors forms in several means informal and personalized networks that are parallel to the State while interacting and interpenetrating with it. It then does not only mirror or shadow the State¹⁵; it does compose what I call “parallel political networks”. It appears that our knowledge of the transversal dimension of this kind of networks is thin and needs to be improved for a better understanding of political Indonesian issues.

To examine these questions I will briefly present how power is regionally conceived and enacted. In a second step, I will describe the main historical evolutions undergone by the local authority networks' position into the power

sphere. We will then examine the role of martial arts organizations as interfaces in the local distribution of power. These groups are at the center of civil militias that gather political parties, bureaucracy and civil society. Finally, I will comment the ideological repertoires mobilized by the civil militias' actors and the way their discourses are locally regarded.

Conceptions of power in Banten and Lampung

Due to the religious dimension of power relations in Southeast Asian societies, and particularly in Indonesia,¹³ the study of politics in the Archipelago leads to anthropological considerations concerning the conception of power. This perspective underlines the question of the relational and hierarchical dimensions of power. This aspect is particularly prevalent considering the main power figures in Banten and Lampung: the religious leaders named *kiai* and the strongmen called *jawara*.

Kiai are the heads of the Muslim boarding schools *pesantren* and they exert strong influence upon the local communities. Many of them appear to be close to Mecca networks – Banten had the most important figures concerning the pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) at the end of the 19th-beginning of the 20th centuries and many *kiai* taught at Masjid al-Haram in Mecca. In the XIXth century, they also developed their own Sufi practices, under the local brotherhood Qadiriyyah wa Naqshbandiyyah.¹⁴

Jawara are the masters of the martial initiations called *silat*. They endeavor four dimensions of power. First, they master techniques of physical protection and they practice a set of rituals that enable them to channel an energy called *eusi(s.)*, that is from divine origin, is invisible and supra-mundane. This energy can be concentrated in a place (then called *kramatan*), an object (then known as *pusaka*), an animal or a person (who is then told *sakti*). It can also circulate: it is not only channeled, reinforced and ritually transferred; it can also be transmitted through descent and kinship. It can provide its owner the capacities of invulnerability, invincibility, invisibility, ubiquity, or longevity. These faculties are markers of a sacred force (*kasékten*).

This channeling is also a source of acquisition of some know-how, particularly ritual ones. I have extensively documented the purification ritual

called *keceran* that is practiced in hundreds of martial initiation schools in Banten and Lampung¹⁵. During *keceran*, all the initiates gather, recite collective Muslim prayers, enunciate political discourses, perform martial dances and fights and summon protective ancestors' entities to be possessed. Possession enables them to obtain signs that will be collectively interpreted regarding the agrarian practices, economical decisions, political strategies and social practices. The heart of the ritual consists of the sprinkling of purification water in the eyes of the initiates by the master. *Keceran* provides violence a subordinate place in a values order where religious aspects are prevalent, particularly the link to martial and invulnerability initiations, the relation with protective spirits and ancestors, the affiliation to the religious Islamic boarding schools *pesantren* and the connection to local Sufi brotherhoods, namely Qadiriyyah wa Naqshbandiyyah in Banten and Rifa'iah in Lampung. *Keceran* also indicates the preeminence of intergenerational and ancestry links: the relations between elder and younger, the reference to founding ancestors, the importance of brotherhoods' and rulers' genealogies. Finally, this ritual values the locality through the reference and pilgrimages to cosmological and mystical centers. The persons able to concentrate this energy in an expert way develop a set of systemic esoteric knowledge that are categorized under the term *elmu*(s.). This knowledge power is the ownership of the saints, magicians, sorcerers, and sovereigns who are considered as sacred kings and *jawara*. *Jawara* are well known to be skillful in mastering *elmu*¹⁶ in such a way that they can use it to reach the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*), as this one is conceived in the local religious variations, and particularly in their Sufi form.

Elmu determines the legitimacy of the *jawarato* held the functions of initiation masters, as well as the role of religious and ritual officers for the villages' and neighborhoods' communities. It also provides them a reputation that spread far beyond their living localities. This fame is the base of a legitimacy that produces consent and from which the *jawara* embody a status of authority (s.*wibawa*). Authority is designed here as the capacity to influence others, and eventually to command obedience. In return, its owner has several obligations toward the community he influences. Further, the members of the community spontaneously collaborate together to serve the collective objectives carried out by the authority representative.

Moreover, as the leaders of martial initiation practices, *jawara* embody a potential of the population's mobilization and a capacity of coercion. It led them to interact with the different governments that succeeded all along Banten's and Lampung's history. The progressive Dutch colonial occupation positioned a number of these authority figures as political intermediaries. In the course of the Indonesian national construction on the XIXth century several *jawara* became the region's main political actors. Reciprocally, the legitimacy provided by *silat* initiation as a base of power led many political representatives to be initiated to *silat* or to take representation functions within the initiation schools. Then, the frontiers between the initiation groups and the political institutions are fluid and porous because there is a crossed implication of the respective agents in both these two fields of social life.

In this context, the practices and imaginaries of physical coercion that are embodied by the *jawara* participate to the articulation – both at the level of practices and ideas – of their authority status and their political functions. The convertibility that exists between these different dimensions of power contributes to the constitution of an original form of power that I propose to identify with the notion of “strength”. Thus, this power dimension embodied by the *jawara* leads me to define them as “strongmen”. The position of *jawara* in Banten's and Lampung's societies have endured deep transformations in the course of the regional histories and so did the different dimensions of power that are sacred force, religious authority, political functions and strength through a coercion capital.

Historical transformation of the regional power networks

At the beginning of the XIXth century, after several centuries of the local sultans' reigns, Banten and Lampung political panorama endured drastic reshaping. Lampung was part of the Banten Sultanate until it was annexed by the Dutch in 1752 and became a *Residentie* of the Dutch East Indies. Beginning in 1834, after a few decades of Raffles' domination and the struggle of the local Sultans, Radin Inten and then after his son Radin Imba Kusuma, the region was ruled by the Dutch. As for Banten sultanate, it was dissolute in 1813 by the colonial.

The Dutch administration commanded through repression and implemented discriminatory laws. The colonial government based the administrative mechanism on a Western model, placing sultans and their families under its direction and converting some of them into bureaucrats. The Dutch administration particularly used the local influence of the strongmen. As stressed by Yanwar Pribadi¹⁷, in colonial Java, almost every region had its own word to identify such figures, such as *brengseng* in Banyumas, *warok* in Ponorogo, *bromocorah* in Kediri, *bangkrengan* or *gento* in Tegal, *lenggaong* in Pemalang, *blaterin* Madura, *palang*, *kebayan* or *weri* in East Java, *jawara* in Banten, Batavia and West Java. Strongmen acted as power brokers in several regions. In Banten and Lampung, they collaborated with *kiai* and placed themselves in an intermediary strategic position between administration and the people. While some *jawara* groups and individuals involved as supervisors for the Dutch administration¹⁸ and other lived from robbery, Michael Charles Williams¹⁹ has convincingly shown that many of the *jawara* tightly collaborated with *kiai* and played a key role during the numerous anti-colonial rebellions of the 19th century.

This authoritarian politics led to numerous peasants' protests, where the role of *kiai* and *jawara* was central²⁰. Thus, in the 19th century in Lampung, Radin Imba II and his son Radin Inten II (1834-1856), the grand-son of Radin Inten I), also led anti colonial rebellions. After the first was exiled and the second was shot, the colonial developed large crop plantations of tobacco, coffee, rubber and coconut. In the same century, Banten endured the most numerous anti colonial rebellions of the Archipelago. In 1888 a religious-political movement disrupted, essentially led by the *kiai*, as Sufi brotherhood's leaders, and *jawara*. The leading figures initiated descent chains of Islamic militancy that would be on the first line during a number of large scale insurrections. They coordinated their political activities with the national scale organizations of Sarekat Dagang Islam and the communist groups that organized a wide revolt in 1926.

During these uprisings local Sufi practices invulnerabilities were a central tool of motivation for rebellion²¹. However, nationalist groups' coordination also played an increasing role in the mobilizations. In the beginning of the 20th century, Lampung represented a large working source for Bantenese peasants and thousands of them went there from April to August to

work in pepper plantations. In the years 1910 there were around 30 000 workers that crossed annually the Sunda straight²². With the 1929 global crisis Lampung's pepper devaluated and reconfigured this working migration organization. It reinforced the difficulties for both populations and widened the recruitment scope of the socio political militant movements. Apart from the idealist collaboration between *kiai* and *jawara* toward the practices of purification (under the label *jihād*), brigands and criminals also formed part of the militant movements. In 1942, the Japanese occupation provided the underworld its first taste of the opportunities offered by major political change²³. The relationship between state and criminals was also ambiguous during the struggle for Indonesian independence in 1945-1949.

After independence, Banten's regional representative, the *Resident* Achmad Chatib, was a prominent *jawara* and the administration was mainly formed by *jawara* and *kiai*. They became a main concern for the President Sukarno's government as some of them composed the ranks of the separatist Islamist movement of Darul Islam. At the same time, others helped the local divisions of the army to fight these opponents. In Lampung also, Darul Islam spread, apparently with connections to Bantenese Islamist groups. These connections lasted for decades and some are still prevalent nowadays in some – claimed and real – transnational jihadist movements²⁴. As noticed by Pribadi²⁸, reactions to New Order's anti Islam policy count Komando Jihad (1977), Jama'ah Imran Movement (1981), the TanjungPriok Riot (1984) and the repression of the Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan Warsidi Lampung (1989).

As religious leaders represented the strongest local power under President Suharto's New Order regime, the government appointed a *jawara*' leader, Chasan Sochib, to work together with the army and government officials from the capital, Jakarta. He had helped his father to develop a rice business between Banten and Lampung and in 1969-1970 he sold cloves from Lampung in Banten. In both regions he was close to the *jawara* networks and was then provided the task of unifying the religious forces, which were composed by Islamic schools (the *pesantren* of Mathla'ul Anwar, close to Nadlatul Ulama, and the modernist *madrasah* of Al Khaeriyah) and prominent Islamic leaders. They were pressured by the regime's political organ, Golkar. The organization in charge of this co-optation, the Ulamas' work unit (Satuan Karya Ulama, Satkar Ulama), worked together with national institutions, like

the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI). Chasan Sochib later created the organization PPPSBBi (also known as Pendekar Banten) in 1971. Through the extended *jawara* network he developed in this organization, Sochib managed to rule the informal power relations during three decades. After Reformasi, the two mandates held by Chasan Sochib's elder daughter, Atut Chosiyah, as governor and the vice-governor position held by the son of Atut Chosiyah since 2017 add to extensive politico-economical monopolies and indicate a strong resilience the so-called Chasan Sochib's "dynasty"²⁵. In this power panorama, counter powers are effectively co-opted under the game of political coalitions and economical arrangements.

As for Lampung, the power panorama seems to be more contrasted. The seven million inhabitants count a large part of migrants' descendants from Java, Madura and Bali who arrived through the transmigration program that started at the beginning of the 20th century of the initiative of the Dutch colonial government. The region obtained the province status in 1964 and developed its own local political dynamics but during Suharto era it still endured the influence of some Bantenese strongmen and political actors. The region also indicates the important role of Bantenese entrepreneurs, particularly in the agricultural sector – it counts for around thirty nine percents of the economy, mainly with productions of coffee, rice, corn, sugar cane, pepper and cows cattle. Banten's influence is also indicated by the activity of strong militia style organizations that act as political brokers and maintained until recently the position of Bantenese leaders as political and economical intermediaries between Lampung, the capital Jakarta and Java.

The martial arts groups as crossroads in the distribution of power

Since the so-called Reformasi era following the fall of President Suharto in 1998, the setting up of decentralization and regional autonomy laws, links between civil society and political institutions have been reshaped at the national level. Transformations particularly touched the "community organizations" (Organisasi Masyarakat, Ormas), that are deep rooted in local communities and benefited from reforms that increased their action capacity. Whereas some of those organizations are widely independent from State's control, others are deeply institutionalized at the regional levels, dealing with provincial governments, political parties and the main religious institutions.

Since they have membership in political instances, they can rely on women, youth, social and humanitarian organizations to unify political support forces or to promote their political actions. For example, in Jakarta, local citizens and politics have to deal with underworld Jakartanese and Bantenese organizations when facing the displacing of populations victims of flooding and State's expropriations. Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI) is currently the more prominent organization that plays this role. It was originally an alliance of petty thugs (*preman*) that presented itself as an Islamist vigilante group and progressively positioned as a power broker, as it was recently illustrated through the national level demonstrations it coordinated (in October, November and December 2016). In Padang, Aceh and Jogjakarta, such organizations have strong roles in crisis and catastrophes management. My own observations in Banten highlight that humanitarian organizations – such as the Red Cross, Taruna Siaga Bencana (Tagana) and Karang Taruna²⁶ – are politically oriented both at the departmental and provincial levels. For instance, their funds are used to organize political events prior to election campaigns.

During Suharto era in Banten, it is PPPSBBI that played the central role of power distribution within the organizations' panorama. It was a crossroads of a large variety of violent groups – ranging from gangs to civil militias' style organizations –, through a game of multiple affiliations. Because of its link to *silat* and invulnerability (*debus*) schools it represented a coercion tool and the threat/use of violence successfully enabled it to guarantee Golkar's winning at every levels of the elections. By having its members as representatives in the local parliament, Pendekar Banten has a quasi monopoly of construction projects in the region. It takes part in industrial affairs in the biggest Southeast Asian steelworks site of Krakatau Steel that was chosen for its proximity with steel field (which quality was overestimated, what provoked the first promoters' indebtedness). PB also influences the main development projects decisions, like the Sunda straight bridge project. The governors of Banten and Lampung discussed of this project with Tomy Winata, the businessman close to the military interests. They met in the 2010's in one of his luxury hotels in Jakarta and later on his yacht, together with the spokesman and legislative council member for Golkar's Banten branch, Adi Surya Dharma.

Moreover, PB is represented in Lampung, where it claims to have a membership of 120 000 persons and 26 associations (*paguyuban*)²⁷, from Bakauhuni harbor in the south until Palembang in the north of the region. On August 21th 1999 was founded the Brotherhood union between Lampung, Banten and Bugis people (Ikatan Persaudaraan Lampung Sai, Banten dan Bugis), for which Chasan Sohib was an honor councilor (*penasehat*). Many Lampung's parliamentarians and administration members originate from this organization. The former regional police commander (South Sumatra and West Java), high ranking official in the national police and ex Lampung governor (2003-2008; 2009-2014), Sjachroedin Zainal Pagaralam, was himself close from Chasan Sohib.

One of PB's main collaborators is Kesti TTKKDH organization. It was created by a Bantenese in Lampung in 1952 and it developed a huge network of *silat* schools in both regions.²⁸ Some of its representatives supported Golkar and nowadays its strength remains important at an informal level. With Reformasi, coercion was replaced by money politics and vote buying. As a result, the representatives of PPPSBBI and TTKKDH have invested into lobbying, through alliances in the media as well as humanitarian, youth, women, sport and culture organizations. In Lampung, a branch named Yayasan TTKDH has developed independently from Kesti TTKKDH²⁹. Many of its membership integrate Paku Banten organization.³⁰

The dynamics found in Banten and Lampung have been examined in a number of recent publications underlining that the Indonesian process of decentralization has not always been equal to democratization. Moreover, it is stressed that at the regional level the rise of civil society has been limited by the strengthening of autocratic networks. Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken³⁵ analyzed the role of what they labeled as 'patrimonial hierarchies' and Ian Wilson³⁶ convincingly underlined that civil militias are still a main tool in these hierarchies' resilience. Under President Suharto, the nationalist organization called Pemuda Pancasila developed important rents in various economical sectors and it now benefits from a larger freedom to exert its activities. It has taken part in the management and implementation plans of projects in Padang area, western Sumatra. Another paramilitary agenda arose after Reformasi, with the civilian groups of Pamswakarsa that were backed by the political intelligentsia to "secure" the political elections. Pamswakarsa was

essentially composed by *silat* tutelary organizations, like Paku Banten and TTKDH's branches of Lampung. The members appear to have been recruited by EMS, an influent person in Banten's politics, through a backing of general Wiranto³¹. EMS is the owner of a transport firm between Banten and Lampung and he is very close form MM, president of a commission in Banten's parliament and a relative of the Islamic party PPP's top leaders in Lampung, where he is also an important investor.

Thus, in the aftermath of Reformasi, several former army and police members made use of discrete budgets to finance and support private militias. The most prominent case is exgeneral Prabowo Subianto³², a serious challenger for the next presidential elections in 2019. He first backed the Young knights of Indonesia (Satria Muda Indonesia, SMI) an organization that assisted the military Special Forces when Prabowo headed it and later supported his political party, the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerakan Indonesia Raya, Gerindra). After Reformasi and a volunteer exile in Jordan, Prabowo came back into the informal power scene through his leadership of the national and international federations of *pencak silat*, respectively the Indonesian union of *pencak silat* (Ikatan Pencak Silat Indonesia, IPSI) and the International union of *silat* (Persatuan Silat Antarbangsa, PERSILAT). He uses these strong organizations as lobbying tools and participates to the development – together with other oligarchs and ex militaries, like ex President Susilo Bambang Yodhoyono – of local vigilante groups that act as political brokers.

Under these backings, in Jakarta and the close urban regions of the Jabodetabek (composed of Jakarta Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi cities), numerous *silat* schools, labeled as Betawi (the people who are locally considered to originate from the capital), have formed their own paramilitary-gangster style organizations. It was the case for the Betawi Brotherhood Forum (Forum Betawi Rempug, FBR) and the Children of Betawi Communication Forum (Forum Komunikasi Anak Betawi, Forkabi) in the first decade of Reformasi. More recently, local formations appeared following the mass demonstrations against Jakarta's governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (called Ahok), like Brigade 411, an organization under FPI's tutelary. These organizations can mobilize mass support for political parties and in return they obtain the direction of development projects and the right to exert racket protection in urban territories. These organizations are more or less

institutionalized and very influent among communities and administration. For example the Islamist vigilante Front Pembela Islam, the Radical Islamist Indonesian Mujahidin Council (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia), and the violent nationalists Pemuda Pancasila and Pemuda Pancamarga have been very active in Aceh since the tsunami catastrophe. They act as complements or even substitutes of the legal authorities.

In Banten, a major *silat* organization is Macan Paku Banten that claims a membership over 5 000 and 5 branches. One of the main branches is the Banten's Nail Martial Movements (Jurus Paku Banten), centered in Serang city. This school formed an organization in 1992 and it is very influent in Lampung under the name of the Familial Cimande Association (Cimande Paguyuban Keluarga). The *silat* schools affiliated to this organization come from a large variety of streams, like Terumbu and Bandrong, or Japanese karate. Macan Paku Banten was headed by IAA, until his death in 2016. As a descendant of the fourth sultan, Abul Mafahir (1596-1651), he was the head of Banten's religious center, Banten Lama. He was in rivalry with FC, a son of Banten's first resident, Achmad Chatib, but unlike him he collaborated with the authorities under Suharto era and then after supported the political figures from Chasan Sochib's network. He has then be backed by the provincial top politicians and continues to act as the religious center's representative, even after the recent enthronization of Bambang Wisanggeni as a sultan - the descendant of the last sultan, Maulana Muhammad Shafiuddin (1809-1813)³³. IAA was close from *silat* masters of other schools, like Wadi, the great master (*guru besar*) of the Banten Cimande Barrier (Cimande Pagar Banten), in Serang⁴⁰. This school is affiliated to Pendekar Banten and Wadi studied with H. As'ad, an important figure of this organization. Through a branch in Lampung, IAA was close to Lampung's last governor, Sjachroedin Zainal Pagaralam (2003-2008 and 2009-2014). This one headed the Lampung's customs Union (Persatuan Adat Lampung, PAL), that included *silat* schools and happened to perform in Banten Lama. The collaborations between schools form part of interregional political common activities. It is illustrated by the rivalries between Macan Paku Banten and Paku Banten from Lampung. This one seems to originate from the first and took its autonomy after Reformasi.

Prior to the Lampung parliamentary elections in 2008, the candidate Sumarsono used Lampung's Paku Banten's support to campaign. In reaction, the governor Sjachroedin Z.P. asked for Macan Paku Banten's support. IAA then sent five cars of *jawara* to Lampung, either to show their strength to Paku Banten or to bargain with it. Indeed, IAA's elder brother, a mastered *silat* practitioner, happened to be a relative of Mukri M.Z., Paku Banten's leader.

Mukri developed his charisma thanks to bloody invulnerabilities exhibitions³⁴ and was a main support of Sjachroedin Z.P. (who is also President of Paku Banten's Direction committee) during the provincial elections' campaign in 2008.³⁵ More recently, Paku Banten published his support for the election of Muhammad Ridho Ficardo as governor (2014-....) and one of Mukri's sons was elected in Lampung provincial parliament. After Mukri's death in 2015 he was replaced by Heriyanasyah.

Those groups are strongly linked and it appears necessary to identify the nature of their connections. For example, whereas Pendekar Banten and the Organ for Banten Family's Potential Management (Badan Pembinaan Potensi Keluarga Banten, BPPKB) collaborate in the security sector, the same Pendekar Banten and TTKKDH have been in strong competition in the political scene. Since Reformasi the groups of Lampung have taken autonomy from Bantenese ones, by acquiring more independence in politics thanks to decentralization laws. The relations that such groups set up with each other provide information on the capacity of the State to assume its role in the sectors of protection and taxation, and in the executive matters.

Figure 1: The main martial arts organizations and civil militias in Banten and Lampung

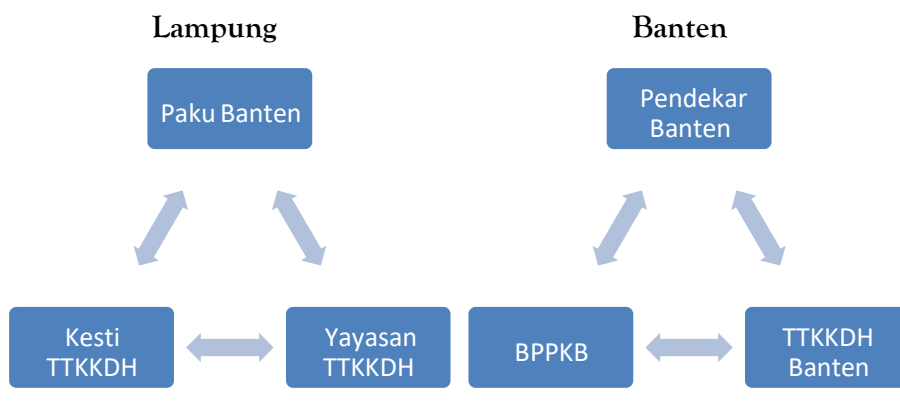


Figure 2: A *silat* demonstration in front of IAA and some of his invites from Lampung (Banten Lama, 2011)



Figure 3: A sticker figuring H. Mukri practicing invulnerabilities (door of Paku Banten's central office, 2011)



The central role of civil militias to gather political parties, bureaucracy and civil society.

Rooted in the colonial period, patrimonial networks have reinforced their structures after independence. In the same way that they were affected by the State construction, they influenced the process of its formation. They contributed to form what Schulte Nordholt has called a « Shadow State » that coexists with bureaucratic institutions, is integrated in the State's structures and in which bureaucrats, businessmen, stakeholders and politicians exert their activities in common networks. Since Reformasi, decentralization, successive political instabilities and the privatization of public owns – with the notable phenomenon of the loss of power of the army and the diminution of its State funding, which caused a massive privatization of the security sector³⁶ – strongly modified the force relations between public institutions and traditional networks of authority.

This process resulted in the increase of security groups' autonomy³⁷ and it modified their status towards the State, passing from official integrated entities in the administrative hierarchy of the New Order, to multiform structures in the post-Suharto era. Most of their leaders are former officials of the army and the police, businessmen of huge groups founded under Suharto, but the civil militias' networks offer extremely diverse combinations, from private groups to institutionalized organizations. For example, I have shown that in West Java, Jakarta et Lampung, the patron-client relations between security groups, institutions and enterprises are much more fragmented than during the New Order, whereas in Banten, where the power keeps a very centralized dimension, the traditional networks of the criminality and the underworld have enhanced their institutionalization and a phenomenon of hyper centralization.

The considerations on the new dynamics that have emerged since Reformasi help to understand some mechanisms of political affiliation, which can seem at first sight contradictory. With the free elections system and the emergence of parties, "Community organizations" have gained independence from the Golkar's central board. Some have kept the direction of its regional's branches, but most of the candidates multiply their affiliations to diverse parties, like PPP or PDIP. They mobilize coalition mechanisms tactically, on

very short term and according to electoral conjunctures. They also use new methods to gain mass votes. From the violence and coercive methods which prevailed under the New Order, they have adopted the distribution of gifts, devices of support and lobbying, money politics, the use of bureaucracy and Medias, cooptation of intellectuals, scientists and students networks. They have taken the direction of women, youth, humanitarian and organizations to diffuse an image of promotion of social and philanthropic actions.

The sanctions-gifts system exerted upon the administrative body, the financial dependence of the education and information of sectors have prevented the emergence of a strong and politically educated middle class. Thus, if decentralization and the multiparty system have increased the role of civil society in political life, they have in the same time permitted the integration of local informal networks in the State apparatus and the intra regional recentralization of the power. It has favored – mainly in the first part of the decentralization process – the rise of identity ideologies, as well as the politicization of nationalist, ethnical and religious groups which were kept out of the political scene before³⁸. It has led to the use of self relatives' monopolistic strategies as a way to centralize power, which efficacy is reinforced by the plural direction functions that adopt their members.

Thus, huge structural problems prevent the full consolidation of democracy and its benefits for civil society. The persistence and reinforcement of centralistic regional elites is one of the main concerns³⁹. These ones are characterized by the weakness of executive power, inequalities for electoral campaigns, the weak role of civil society and women in political affairs, nepotism practices in the governments, the parliaments and the parties. Then, one of the main challenges to consolidate democracy relies on the restructuration of the executive which would guarantees the integrity of the judiciary system. Social mobility is another indicator of the democratization process. It may be stimulated through a fair educative system, the transparence of nominations in the education sector and in the competitive examination for the integration in the public service. The rise of civil society's role in Indonesian society will also be linked with the favoring of Medias' independence and the disposal for a fair access to the political sphere and its tools of diffusion.

But another key aspect to strengthen the participation of civil society to politics that benefit to the common good is a wider socio-historical perspective. This process is largely blocked by one sided actors, mainly the inheritors of the New Order's regime, and it adds to a rewriting of Indonesia's history. With the wide use of social media and the high image circulation it favors, the re-historicization phenomenon appears as a major political convector.

Civil militias' legitimating references: religion and ethnicity

To understand the ideology shaped and mobilized by civil militias' leaders to legitimate their political positions, we are led to examine the historic evolution of the other main power pole in Banten and Lampung that is political Islam. Indeed, while during the New Order the religious organizations were effectively controlled, repressed or co-opted, with Reformasi many Islamic groups re-emerge as potential political forces. In the first years of Reformasi, the rise of Muslim Brotherhood oriented party, the Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS), illustrated the changing continuities of Islamic networks. Another aspect of this evolution was marked by the militancy movements for Islamic law, Sharia. In Banten, some laws were examined by the provincial parliament in 2000-2001 and in 2002, EMS, Chasan Sochib's former right hand, founded the Preparatory committee for the Islamic law's application in Banten (Panitia Penerapan Pelaksanaan Syariat Islam Banten, P3SIB). He used his position in the editorial board of the radical journal *Sabili* to promote his action⁴⁰. As for Lampung, several members of TTKDH's direction board used their position in the Islamic modernist Muhammadiyah organization.

In the same period, Banten and Lampung also witnessed the civil militias' instrumentalization of religious radicalism as a way of reinforcing legitimacy over the political Islamic community. EMS urged Bantenese to prepare for jihad in Ambon and notorious Muslim leaders indicated proximity with the terrorist organization Jemaah Islamiyah. The actions of Imam Samudra, one of the Bali bombings' main organizers, had a very favorable echo in a large part of the population in a period in which liberalization and the opening to foreign investments and influences created public anxiety. In that time, while PB's monopolies in the economic and security sector was partly

threatened by several personalities from the military Special Forces, Kopassus, the organization approached radical groups like Front Hizbullah, headed by Cecep Busthomi, one of the FPI's founders. Pendekar Banten also successfully infiltrated the semi-governmental MUI and achieved to counter a *fatwa* that aimed to prohibit *debus* practice.

After the 2005 "conservative turn", as this period was labeled by Bruinessen and contributors⁴¹, Pendekar Banten aimed to gain control on mainstream religious networks, for example through the Friendship forum of traditional Islamic boarding schools (Forum Silaturahmi Pondok Pesantren Salafi, FSPPS). As a result, for the 2007 governor's election, when PB presented Chasan Sochib's eldest daughter, Atut Chosiyah, as candidate, she obtained the support from a large part of the Muslim leadership. The main opponents, like *kiai*FC, did not obtained the support they hoped and until today they remain largely active under informal ways⁴². During her second mandate, Atut Chosiyah was imprisoned for corruption. After the death of her father in 2012 the her family's political positions reconfigured but many family members and relatives still hold key posts in the Bantenese political parties, the administration and government.

In 2014, PB positioned itself as a stronghold against transnational jihadism, by publicly declaring hostility towards ISIS. A few times later, EMS organized a similar event, by gathering members from the political, military and police elite to declare the creation of an anti-ISIS movement, the Front-mbai. A few times later, in 2016-2017, EMS and Chasan Sochib's grand-son confronted for the provincial elections, respectively as vice-governors with Rano Karno and Wahidin Halim. It seems that the national scale demonstrations against Jakarta's governor, Ahok, played a decisive role in the urns, as it participated to disqualify the nationalist party PDIP - Rano Karno's party.

Apart from religious arguments, the local features that were instrumentalized were ethnicity and regionalism. They were particularly used at the beginning of Reformasi, and more recently they begun to emerge again as political levers. A first factor of this references mobilization was decentralization. The lack of supra regional control by the recently decentralized State facilitated collaborations between regional organizations. In Jakarta suburbs, Bantenese groups shared territories with FBR, Forkabi and

Pemuda Pancasila. In Lampung, many youth in the rural areas joined the ethnicist Lampung Sai, the main opponent to the *pencaksilat* organizations Paku Banten and TTKKDH⁴³. In Banten, BPPKB conveys ethnic ideology to enforce its actions and Pendekar Banten uses religious arguments to take part on socio-political life. Regionalist groups support from local elites but also from national political actors, as a way to form competitive power to the religious organizations that constitute political support bases. This divide-to-rule-strategy can sometimes be accompanied by fusions between Islamist and regionalist ideologies. FBR particularly embodied this association⁴⁴ and FPI tries in many ways to operate the same concentration of militancy references.

The studies concerning the formation of local ethnicities' ideology and its use by the New Order's centralistic State provide a diachronic point of view on the logics of continuity of the local aristocratic rules⁴⁵. The cultural characteristics that are exploited enable to examine hierarchical relations in the informal political networks and they help to understand why they can be legitimate for local communities. It brings to wider historical and sociological considerations about the civil society's perception of ideological discourses that were mobilized under the colonial rule to curb the local cultures into their folkloric aspects and to control customary law. These discourses were reshaped during the national struggle for independence to unify heterogenic cultures. Later, the New Order regime used it to build a hyper centralistic State, and it serves nowadays to patrimonial networks that reproduce this power centralism at the local level.

The representatives (*tokoh masyarakat*) of the local authority are highly influential on the communities and they play key functions on the diffusion of these ideologies. Through complex political affiliations, negotiations and contestations play, they endeavor the role of intermediaries in intra and inter community relations as well as between communities and both regional and national authorities. Their actions take place in highly diverse spheres, as election process, agrarian land distribution, trades implantation and management, microfinance and cooperatives projects, high studies access, professional opportunities and matrimonial alliances. Consequently, if they are involved in underworld networks they can legitimize the political position of those parallel groups. Organizations like Pendekar Banten, BPPKB and Paku Banten conscientiously maintain the low level of education of the citizens, they

control the media and they prevent the rise of a political educated middle class. On the other hand, they are central to the communities to maintain strong social coherence and to build strategies aiming to take best advantage of political and power contexts. Thus, since the presence of intermediary organizations is often proportional to the fragility of social links, their study can help to understand the resilience of local communities when facing external networks pressures.

Figure 4: Representatives of BPPKB in Pandeglang, holding the banner of the organization (2011)



Conclusion: studying Indonesian politics from the bottom

Two decades after the beginning of Reformasi, Indonesian power relations are still dominated by informal and interpersonal relationship. The main actors of this nexus are situated simultaneously in social, economical and political spheres and then cumulate a set of multiform capital. In this power panorama, civil militias appear as intermediaries between civil society, the administration and the government. As semi-institutionalized organs, they mediate the relations between the different political levels of society: different kinds of elites, the growing middle class and the popular fragments of the

population. By their transversal structures, the civil militias indicate porosity between these social strata but in the same time they participate to their fixation.⁴⁶ At the crossroads of these militias, the martial arts groups play an important role as initiation bases for the activist masses and they represent legitimating levers for their representatives and contractors.

The cases I have discussed here in South Sumatra and West Java show that the regional civil militias must be understood through regional comparison and thanks to a national level perspective. This approach enables to point out major changes that occurred in the course of the decentralization and democratization processes. With decentralization, the loss of supra regional control resulted in different kinds of processes. In Lampung it enabled Yayasan TTKDH and Paku Banten to gain autonomy toward Banten's political parallel networks. In Banten it permitted the main civil militias' representatives to reach high-rank political positions while the security sector was conquered by new organizations like BPPKB. This organization found the possibility to develop beyond the province, in Jakarta and West Java.

This study also indicates that the civil militias benefit from the support of the central government's officials, as it was shown at the Reformasi beginning by their collaboration with national-level paramilitary groups, like Satria Muda Indonesia and Pamswakarsa. More recently, the strengthening of Pemuda Pancasila (which is finishing the construction of a big buildings complex near the police central office in Serang) indicates a strong resilience of the collusion phenomenon between the power local representatives and national political figures of the dominant oligarchy. In the context of the "post anti-Ahok" events and in prevision of the next presidential elections, the study of these civil militias points out how political parallel networks compete for power, beyond the parties and political chairs. Thus, my objective here is to stress the need for the comprehension of the tension within martial arts organizations, like the regional Indonesian Pencak Silat People (Masyarakat Pencak Silat Indonesia, MASPI) led by reformist elites in Bandung, or the national federation IPSI headed by Prabowo Subianto. This kind of study may provide significant insights on the dynamics that connect together authority leaders, regional and national administration, political representatives and a large part of the Indonesian population.

Endnotes:

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² My research is based on thirteen fieldworks in Banten between 2004 and 2017, for a total period of thirty nine months.

³ See for example Cribb, Robert (1991) *Gangsters and Revolutionaries: The Jakarta People's Militia and the Indonesian Revolution 1945-1949*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press; Van Treche, Mary (2012) « Réseaux musulmans et groupes paramilitaires en Indonésie. Le cas de l'organisation Pendekar Banten » ("Islam networks and paramilitary groups in Indonesia. The case of the organization Pendekar Banten"), Bangkok, *Les Carnets de l'IRASEC*, n° 20; Aspinall, Edward and Mietzner, Marcus (2010) *Problems of Democratization in Indonesia: Elections, Institutions, and Society*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; Bouchier, David (1999) "Skeletons, vigilantes and the Armed Forces fall from grace", in Arief Budiman, Barbara Hatley and Damien Kingsbury (eds.), *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia*, Melbourne, Monash Asia Institute; Wilson, Ian Douglas (2015) *The Politics of Protection Rackets in Post-New Order Indonesia: Coercive Capital, Authority and Street Politics*, London, Routledge.

⁴ Berenschot, Ward and van Klinken, Gerry (2014) *In search of middle Indonesia: middle classes in provincial towns*, Leiden Boston Brill, Power and place in Southeast Asia, vol. 40.

⁵ Masaaki, Okamoto and Rozaki, Abdur (eds.) (2006), *Kelompok kekerasan dan bos lokal di era Reformasi*, Yogyakarta, Institute for Research and Empowerment.

⁶ Buehler, Michael (2014) "Elite Competition and Changing State-Society Relations: Shari'a Policymaking in Indonesia" in Ford, Michele and Pepinsky, Tom (eds.), *Beyond Oligarchy: Wealth, Power, and Contemporary Indonesian Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications: 157-175.

⁷ Madinier, Rémy (2016), « De la Revolusi à la Reformasi: itinéraires d'une mutation politique in aboutie », in Madinier, Rémy (ed.) *Indonésie contemporaine*, Bangkok, Paris, Irasec et Les Indes Savantes: 139-186. ⁷ Schulte Nordholt, Henk and Klinken, Gerry van (ed.) (2007), *Renegotiating boundaries: local politics in Post Suharto Indonesia*, Leiden, KITLV.

⁸ Bertrand, Romain (2008), « Les « guerres du vice » du gouverneur Sutiyoso (1997-2007). Entreprises criminelles, milices Islamistes et pouvoir politique à Djakarta », in Jean-Louis Briquet and Gilles Favarel Garrigues (eds.), *Milieu criminel et pouvoirs politiques*, Paris, Editions Karthala.

⁹ Carnegie, Paul J. (2009), "Democratization and Decentralization in Post-Soeharto Indonesia: Understanding transition dynamics", *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 81, n° 4, Winter 2008-2009: 515-525. ¹⁰ Op. cit.: XVI. ¹¹ Hadiz, Vedi R. (2003) "Local Power: Decentralization and Political Reorganization in Indonesia", paper presented at *Globalization, Conflict and Political Regimes in East and Southeast Asia Conference*, Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, Western Australia, 15-16 August.

¹⁰ Harris, John, Stokke, Kristian and Tornquist, Olle (eds.) (2004) *Politicizing democracy: the new local politics of democratization*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

¹¹ Mizuno, Kosune and Phongpaichit, Pasuk (2009), *Populism in Asia*, Singapore, NUS Press and Kyoto, Kyoto University Press.

¹² Bruinessen, Martin Van (1995) *Kitab Kuning: Pesantren dan Tarekat, Tradisi-Tradisi Islam di Indonesia*, Bandung, Mizan. ¹⁵ It is not the point here to develop the notion of "parallel

political network”, nevertheless it would be useful to discuss it as a way to contrast Syarif Hidayat’s analysis (cf. “Shadow State? Business and politics in the province of Banten”, in Henk Schulte Nordholt et al. (dir.), *Renegotiating boundaries: local politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, Leiden, KITLV, 2007: 203-224). Indeed, the case I study shows that the interests are not concentrated in one single structure, that the parallel political organizations are fragmented and heterogeneous, they don’t mechanically follow territorial boundaries and don’t monopolize legitimate violence. Then, they don’t embody several of the state’s characteristics.

¹³Ricklefs, Merle Calvin (1991) *A history of modern Indonesia since c. 1300*, London, Mac Millan, 2nd edition.

¹⁴Bruinessen (1995), *op. cit.*: 246-284.

¹⁵Facal, Gabriel (2016), *Keyakinan dan Kekuatan. Seni Bela Diri Silat Banten*, Jakarta, Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.

¹⁶Hudaeri, Mohammad (2007), *Tasbih dan golok*, Serang, Sekretariat Daerah Banten, revised edition, Serang.

¹⁷Pribadi, Yanwar (2014), “The historical roots and identities of local strongmen groups in Indonesia”, *Kawalu*, vol. 1, n° 2: 101-144.

¹⁸Cribb, Robert (1991), *Gangsters and Revolutionaries: The Jakarta People’s Militia and the Indonesian Revolution 1945-1949*, North Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia: 18-19.

¹⁹Williams, Michael Charles, *Communism, religion and revolt in Banten*, Southeast Asia Series n° 86, Athens, Ohio, Ohio Center for International Studies, 1990.

²⁰See Yanwar Pribadi, 2014, *op. cit.*, for a synthesis of these processes.

²¹Interview with Hafid Asad (July 2017, Serang), descendant of Abuya Muqri, one of the 1926 uprising’s main leaders.

²²*Verslag Economischen Toestand*, 1924, vol. II: 218, 224 (quoted by Williams, *op. cit.*, 1990).

²³Pribadi, 2014, *op. cit.*: 108.

²⁴Personal investigations 2011 and 2017. Pribadi, 2014, *op. cit.*: 110.

²⁵Personal investigations during more than ten years, dozen of interviews, including Chasan Sohib and several of his family’s members.

²⁶See also the recent controversies about the increase of the government’s funding to these organizations in *PilarBanten.com*, “Program Khusus Tagana dan Karang Taruna Dipertanyakan”, September 13th 2017.

²⁷Declaration of Isa Jazuli, president of Golkar’s direction board in Bandar Lampung (*Gatra*, November 6th 2002).

²⁸Interview (August 2017, Serang) with the family of Mayor H. Muhammad Muslich bin H. Abdul Karim (president of Kesti TTKKDH in 1952-1992).

²⁹Investigations in Lampung and Banten in 2011, based on several interviews with members of Yayasan TTKDH and Kesti TTKKDH and dozens participations to trainings.

³⁰Interview with Aom Karomani, professor at Universitas Lampung and author of “Ulama, Jawaradan Umaro : Studi Tentang Elite Lokal Di Banten”, *Sosiohumaniora*, Vol. 11, No. 2, July 2009: 168-182. ³⁵*Op. cit.* ³⁶*Op. cit.*

³¹ Interview with EMS and MM (2011 and 2016). Cf. also EMS's testimony in Mansur, Chatib, *Profil Haji Tubagus Chasan Sohib, beserta komentar 100 tokoh masyarakat seputar Pendekar Banten*, Cilegon, Pustaka Antara Utama, 2000: 182-183. Cf. also *Kompas*, « Struktur Pam Swakarsasepertimiliter », June 28th 2004.

³² On Prabowo's career and particularly on his involvement in human rights abuses in East Timor, see Klinken, Gerry van (2014), "Prabowo and human rights", *Inside Indonesia*, n° 116, April-June.

³³ Interview with Bambang Wisanggeni, August 2017, Banten Lama. ⁴⁰ Interview with IAA, 2011, Banten Lama.

³⁴ Interview with H. Mukri, 2011, Bandar Lampung.

³⁵ Afriatama Semidang, Ferryzar (2009), *Politikasi pada perguruan paku banten dalam mendukung drs. Sjachroedin Z.P. pada pemilihan Gubernur Lampung 2008*, Unpublished Master thesis in Lampung University, Bandar Lampung.

³⁶ Many studies are dedicated to this phenomenon. For example, Ian Wilson describes the role of private security groups in the labor sector (Wilson, Ian Douglas (2006) "The changing contours of organized violence in post New Order Indonesia", *Critical Asian studies*, vol. 38, n° 2, June: 265-297).

³⁷ On the military's position during the democratic transition, cf. Mietzner, Marcus (2009) "Military Politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia: From Turbulent Transition to Democratic Consolidation", Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS).

³⁸ For similar examples, cf. van Klinken, Gerry (2007) "Communal violence and democratization in Indonesia: small town wars", London, Routledge. The author shows that in Kalimantan or Ambon, the exacerbation of ethnic and religious values was led mainly by politicized organizations.

³⁹ Schulte Nordholt, Henk (2004) "Decentralization in Indonesia: less state more democracy?" in J. Harris, K. Stokke and Tornquist, Olle (eds.), *Politicizing democracy: the new local politics of democratization*: 29-50, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴⁰ Sabili, "Perda Siap Tampung Syariat Islam", July 29th 2002.

⁴¹ Van Bruinessen, Martin (ed.) (2013), *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the 'Conservative Turn'*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

⁴² Interviews with FC (2011; 2017, Banten Lama).

⁴³ Personal communication of Yuhki Tajima. See also Yuhki Tajima (2016), "Political Development and the Fragmentation of Protection Markets: Politically Affiliated Gangs in Indonesia", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*: 1-27.

⁴⁴ Wilson (2015), *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ Klinken, Gerry Van and Schulte Nordholt, Henk (eds) (2007), *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ Wilson (2015), *op. cit.*: 171.

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