The establishment of Banten as a new province was a result of Indonesian policy on decentralization which released in the Habibie administration. The political aspiration in establishing Banten as a separate province in the West of Java can be traced back in the late of 1950s. This aspiration could not be accommodated as the republic after independence remained anxious regional autonomy as the threat to the unity of a new nation. Moreover, under New Order state (1968-1998), Banten was a part of West of Java. The politics of centralism practiced by New Order state brought about the disadvantages to the regions including Banten. Banten suffered from the poverty, high number of ‘backward villages’, and malnutrition. Banten mainly composed by two parts. The vast majority of ethnic Javanese had been settled in the northern part of Banten and southern part which settled mainly by ethnic Sundanese. Then, administratively, Banten consists of four cities (Serang, Cilegon, South Tangerang, Tangerang) and four regencies (Serang, Lebak, Pandeglang, and Tangerang).

It is commonly understood that the establishment of a new region driven by multidimensional and complexity factors. One of central motive behind the decentralization policy is to make local governments empowered and more responsive to local needs. Moreover, the decentralization also involved the transfer of power and authority from central government to local governments which will enhance the local political participation, significant degree of responsibility in delivering the public services, and welfare of local people (Fitrani et al. 2005). In contrast, local autonomy in Banten has been characterized by the increasing number of local ‘strong men’ and political gangsters. The network of local ‘strong men’ in Banten threatens the aims of decentralization which results in the increasing corruption of local officials. I argue that instead of empowered local political participation regional autonomy in Banten characterized by the emergence of local ‘strong men’ which relied on the traditional political network of Jawara. This network of ‘strong men’ controlled various business associations and local politics through patron-client network relation.

Network of Jawara and Patronage

One of the aims of decentralization is the extending democracy by involved the local political participation. Decentralization aimed to enhance the participatory democracy, which recognized the citizenship participation to define common problem and determine their solution. The participatory democracy required the “decision-making process results from negotiations directly established by various socio-political actors to influence the agenda…subordinate decision making to the idea of social justice” (Garcia-Guadilla 2002: 90). In contrast, the decentralization policy in Indonesia had been characterized by the emergence of highly corrupt local officials, the rise of money politics, and the network of political gangsters that controlled the local government (Hadiz 2004).

In this respect, both Masaaki and Hamid confirmed the emergence of local political network that controlled Banten after the fall of Suharto. They stated that “It is in Banten are that a violent local oligarch has most successfully entrenched himself
economically and politically, at least until now” (Masaaki & Hamid 2008: 112). Some of local oligarchs who live in the regions without rich natural resources such as Banten have been driven by the ‘rent seeking behavior’ that exploited local government budget in order to support their political-economy resources. Thus, the sustainability of local oligarchs power in relatively poor regions depend on the corruption and network within the prominent figure in local government to gain their political interests (Masaaki & Hamid 2008).

The persistence of local oligarch in Banten to control the network of local businesses and local power mostly supported by the fact that Banten area strategically located near Jakarta that flourished the private security provider in cooperation with military group and police. They also control the security network organization in order to secure local political power in many political events such as election, riots, and coercive instrument to reach the political support from local people. Eventually, the sustainability of their power supported by the fact that in Banten particularly in southern areas characterized by poverty and the absence of organized middle class that opposed the domination of oligarchs (Masaaki and Hamid 2008).

Some of local oligarchs in Banten built the political dynasty during the decentralization era. The policy of decentralization contributed to the emergence of local oligarchs which come to power through the process of democratization. Chasan Sochib is a prominent figure among the local oligarchs in Banten. The rise of Chasan Sochib political dynasty primarily supported by the successful story in local business which began under the New Order state. Chasan actively involved in the infrastructure project while Banten remained a part of West Java administration. In addition, his domination on Banten became powerful when his daughter won the local election as the vice-governor of Banten in 2001. In the aftermath, Chasan had direct access to intervene the political decision on local budgeting and the competition to gain the local project which result in the advantages for his businesses (Hidayat 2007).

The direct election held in 2007 in Banten. This local direct election was a political moment in consolidating Chasan’s political dynasty. He supported Ratu Atut Chosiah, his daughter, to run for local direct election. Atut-Masduki gained the victory in the governorship election with slim margin. There are the reasons behind the victory of Atut-Masduki with slim margin. The first reason is that Atur-Masduki supported by the political resources particularly the network within local bureaucracy. Second, the popularity of Zulkifli-Marissa could not beat Atut-Masduki who distributed much money and logistics during the campaign which supported by strong local networks even in the remotest backwaters villages in Banten. Third Tryana-Benyamin did not use much money in their campaign to gain the voters as they campaign ‘clean politics’ (Masaaki & Hamid 2008).

Moreover, Chasan Sochib is the most prominent figure among other oligarchs in Banten. The local politics particularly in the district level also to some extent dominated by the network of oligarch who took advantages from the traditional organizations, the network of jawara. The sustainability of jawara-entrepreneurs political power in Banten also reflected the state euphoria that local actors perceived decentralization and regional autonomy as the means in increasing their political domination. In contrast, decentralization rarely understood as the transfer of power and authority that empower local authority to provide better public services and enhance local political participation.
in the process of developing local economy. In fact, political actors in local level seemed to be the little king in their own kingdom which distorted decentralization to operate local centralistic system in governing local people (Firman 2009).

On the other hand, post Suharto Indonesia has created the greater political space for jawara-entrepreneurs and local elites to build the strong network with local state actors which shows how the decision-making and policy implementation influenced through political bargain which increased the existing rampant corruption in local government. It is remarkably difficult for local officials to implement the policy that meet the need of local people if the governorship and top position in the districts led by the network of patronage. The local government in Banten has been controlled by the power of ‘Tuan Besar’ who play significant role “over the conducts of local government represents the ‘cost in return’ for the political and economic investment he made at the time of election” (Hidayat 2004: 224).

The domination of jawara in Banten during the decentralization both in provincial level and district level confirmed the analysis of Hadiz that the process of democratization has been manipulated by the predatory network patronage within the system of power relation. Unfortunately, the freedom of press and political party system highly competitive but it is not automatically produce the culture of accountability and transparency which were necessary in the process of democratization. The domination of jawara in local politics in Banten also confirmed the assumption that the old actors in authoritarian regime were successful in adapting democratic system as they win in the direct local election so that gained the political legitimacy in controlling the local government (Hadiz 2004).

In this respect, the network of jawara is part of local political patronage in consolidating the economic resources and political power. In the centralistic authoritarian system, the network of patronage centered in presidential palace in Jakarta which extended to the provinces, towns and villages. In contrast, during the decentralization the network of patronage have been reconstituted themselves through new alliances which subordinated the democratic institution particularly local government into their economic and political objectives. In the case of Banten, these jawara’s network have been tightly controlled the local parliament through local political parties, business associations such as local chamber of commerce, or local media. In short, they established “newly decentralized, competing and sometimes overlapping networks of patronage” (Hadiz 2004: 711). This new constellation of predatory network also proved that “decentralization is facilitating the emergence of more localized patronage networks that are relatively autonomous of central state authority” (Hadiz 2004: ibid).

These predatory networks in Banten have been benefited most from the process of decentralization and the democratic system after the fall of Suharto. Most of prominent actors of this predatory patronage stem from the New Order state. The individual and groups of jawara such as Chasan Sochib and its paramilitary organizations have been operated under the New Order state as well as actively involved in the local political party especially Golkar. In term of political opportunity structure that provided by decentralization and democratization, they now moved further into open competition of electoral democracy. They perceived that local institution of democratic governance could protect their interest which previously required centralized military and repressive apparatus. In addition, the individual and groups of jawara in Banten sought that “politics
of money and political violence can be potent tools in securing their position” (Hadiz 2004: 712). The domination of jawara’s individual and groups in political network is not only took place in Banten. It also took place in many countries after the fall of the authoritarian regime such as Russia, Philippine, and Thailand.

The political dynasty in Banten which represented by the clan of Chasan Sochib in the level of province has been benefited from the process of democratization and decentralization after the fall of centralistic government. Chasan Sochib is not the only a figure that represented the success of jawara-entrepreneurs in adapting the process of decentralization and reached the victory of electoral politics. The process of local power consolidation also take place in the district level such as in Cilegon, Rangkasbitung, and Tangerang that reflected that the constellation of local patronage increasingly developed throughout Banten using the procedures of democracy which require the open competition through direct local election.

Finally, process of decentralization and democratization in Banten results in the increasing collusive politics between jawara-entrepreneur and local government which distorted the main aim of policy of decentralization in empowering local government, increase the welfare and public services. However, the main goal of decentralization enhance the central government shifts political power and responsibilities to local government which close to local people, granting administrative autonomy, and political legitimacy, so that will enhance popular participation and provide better public services.

Bibliography


