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Indonesian local politics and the marriage of elite interests: Case study of elite democracy in Gorontalo

Reynaldo de Archellie1*, Munawar Holil2 and Adrianus Waworuntu3

Abstract: This article explores the conduct of local governance in the decentralization era in Indonesia using new institutionalist framework. It departs from the argument that Indonesia’s democratization and decentralization created new political actors in local sphere, as suggested by the rising numbers of new autonomous regions after decentralization policy started in 1999. This article argues that, first, informal institutions can be a substitute to formal arrangement in local governance. Second, local governance and local political conduct are elite biased that utilize formal democratic institutions appropriately for the elite’s interests. To explore this phenomenon, a case study method that focuses on Gorontalo Province as one of the products of decentralization policy in Indonesia is used. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, FGD, historical sources, and Internet-based news outlets. This article concludes that the model of local governance in Gorontalo is an arena for contending social forces. It can be seen from the shared interests between indigenous elites and the interests of formal leaders, who are elected through the mechanism of direct local elections (pilkada). The mutual interests within formal dan informal procedures were utilized in

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reynaldo de Archellie is a lecturer in Russian Studies in Faculty of Humanities at Universitas Indonesia. He had been involved in research on Chinese communities in Indonesia in the last 5 years and Indonesia’s local leadership in the last 3 years. Reynaldo de Archellie can be contacted at: reynaldode@ui.ac.id

Munawar Holil is a lecturer and researcher at Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia. He also writes books and articles. He interested in old manuscripts, folkmores, and local traditions. Munawar Holil can be contacted at: kangmumu2016@gmail.com

Adrianus L.G. Waworuntu is senior lecturer and researcher in Department of Area Studies and in Chinese Studies Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia. His research interests are local leadership, Chinese classic literatures, and Indonesian Chinese diaspora. Adrianus L.G. Waworuntu can be contacted at: adri.waworuntu@gmail.com

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This study revisits the link between democratization and decentralization that creates the blossoming of new autonomous local government in Indonesia after the fall of authoritarian Soeharto regime (1966–1998). This article explores the conduct of local governance in the decentralization era in Indonesia, commenced in 1999, using new institutionalist framework. In this study, we put attention to how local government, together with local social forces, manage and reorganize local governance in the era of decentralization where every autonomous region granted full autonomy to conduct its governance legally. We used a case study method that focuses on Gorontalo Province as the lowest rate of income per capita and gross regional product (GRP) in 2000, one year after decentralization policy had started in Indonesia. This Article concludes that the cultural leaders’ elite groups used ideological power resources derived from traditional values, teachings and wisdom which were not only to influence the course of local governance, but also to constraint the formal leaders’ behavior.
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Subjects: Culture & Development; Cultural Studies; Race & Ethnicity

Keywords: local governance; Gorontalo; decentralization; new institutionalism

1. Introduction

Decentralization policy in Indonesia that commenced in 1999 promised a radical change. Almost 32 years during New Order regime (1966–1998), Indonesia’s political system and governance was exercised with centralized method and authoritarian rule. Decentralization offers the opportunities to better attune local government policy to local needs, capacities, resources, and preferences (Oates, 1993). Decentralization was aimed at increasing public participation in decision-making process and creating transparent and accountable governance. Based on Indonesia’s experience on democratization and decentralization, participation and redistribution were the main issues that shape the landscape of Indonesian political institutions. Before the decentralization was initiated, Indonesia’s society was governed under tight control of centralized authority. The government restricted civil and political liberties and redistributed resources in a top-down development policy approach. Following the regional monetary crisis that swept Indonesia in mid-1997, the New Order Regime under Soeharto saw the dawn of the collapsing of the political structure it has nurtured for 32 years. The crisis was not the only burden borne by the regime since it was followed by international and domestic pressures to reform. On 21 May 1998, the Reformasi movement triggered by the deepening economic crisis, urged to dismantle the authoritarian political structure, and angered to uprooting corruption, collusion, and nepotism practices, forced President Soeharto to resign (Anwar, 2005, p. 202).

When the centro-authoritarian system had collapsed, the transition period to democracy started with decentralization arrangement to ensure that participation of public political liberties and redistribution of political and economic resources to local government were delivered by the state political institution in the first phase of transition. The new central government headed by Baharuddin Jusuf Habibie, enacted two laws on decentralization: Law 22/1999 on regional autonomy and Law 25/1999 on fiscal arrangements between central and local government. The main objective of these laws was to ensure the public service delivery including public works, land management, investment and so forth was transferred to sub-national government. Meanwhile, the defence, security, judiciary, foreign relations, and monetary and fiscal policy remained the responsibility of the central government. It then followed by two amendments of these Laws in 2004 and 2014, in which the local governments gained more authority to organize local government.

The phenomenon of decentralization as a part of democratization in Indonesia has gained wide attention from scholars. Some studies had reported the evaluation of decentralization program on insititutional, fiscal, and regional development approach (Fossati, 2018; Hill & Vidyattama, 2016; Faguet, 2014; Hadiz, 2004). Other reports showed that decentralization also gave the way to restore and revitalize local government into the lowest tier of administrative unit below national, provincial, district, and subdistrict, which also known as desa (Antlov et al., 2016; Antlov 2003). The existing empirical literature has analysed the impact of fiscal decentralization on local institutions (Pal & Wahaj, 2017), new democratic framework in Indonesia’s village government (Antlov, 2003), and various studies on different local institutions, such as gampong in Aceh (Gayatri, 2009) and nagari in West Sumatera (von Benda-Beckmann 2013). Most existing studies were tried to explain how decentralization affects governance by focusing their examination on formal institutions, such as economic policies, elections, government institutions, or legal frameworks. In
In that circumstances, this article tries to answer the question what is the best approach to understand local politics that presumably was the extension of national politics? How to explain the way power and authority are reconstructed in the decentralization era? What is the best explanation to understand the way in which formal and informal leaders shared and converged their interests, authority, and power into a new equilibrium? In order to answer these questions, we develop a conceptual framework using new institutionalism approach and elite-based democracy theory to explore the way local leaders using new democratic institutions to organize political life. The new institutionalism is a recent thinking that allow the elements of an old institutionalism, which focused it analyses on formal political institution, blended with the non-institutionalist styles of recent theories of politics that give more rooms for informal institutions as independent explanation for contemporary political phenomenon (March & Olsen, 1984). To complete our conceptual framework about how local formal and informal leaders organize local community’s political life, we use elite democracy theory or elite deliberative theory. Elite democracy, as an alternative to the regulation of the political system, when compared to the model of liberal democracy or oligarchy, offers the idea of reconciliation. The elitist model of democracy offers a procedure that allows peaceful competition and is open to elite groups to fight for government power (Wintrop, 2007). For this reason, the conceptual framework we develop here not only used as a way to understand local politics, but also the development and spread of new institutions, which are structuring politics in a new way.

This article uses Gorontalo, a province that is located in the northern part of Sulawesi island, as a case study to understand the way local political actors reorganize power and authority using democratic institutions. Gorontalo was separated from North Sulawesi Province in December 2000 as the 32nd province in Indonesia. In terms of gross regional product (GRP), Gorontalo had the lowest income per capita in 2000, 1.77 million rupiah compared to Jakarta as the capital with 27.75 million and East Kalimantan as the richest mining income province with 33.63 million. In 2013 the number were 3.32 million (Gorontalo), 47.87 million (Jakarta), and 31.52 (East Kalimantan) respectively (Central Statistics Agency/BPS). Demographically, Gorontalo is dominated by Gorontalo ethnic group (90 percent) and mostly Muslim (96.7 percent) (BPS, 2017). Thus, it is fascinating to explore Gorontalo’s local politics by examining how the society reorganize it’s political system using democratic institutions after commencing its autonomous governance in 2000 and how the local political actors combine material and non-material power resources and struggle to win power contestation politically.

2. The new institutionalism
Institutionalism is basically the study of institutions in different context of human interactions. It concerned with institutions that are defined as “law, custom or practice”, “the practices and customs of government”, “the forms of social organization”, “special procedures and practices”, “the patterned interactions that are predictable”, and “informal codes of conduct, written
contracts, complex organizations” (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013, p. 3; Guy, 1999, p. 18). These variety of definitions inform us that institutions exist in every sphere of our lives, from social, economic to political. We can describe markets, elections, political party, mosque, marriage, to media as institutions. The institutionalist perceived that human behavior and identity are shaped and influenced by institutions in which they are taken place and observed during human interactions. However, the most important question is what does it mean to describe institution as “political”? What are the differences between “old” and “new” institutionalism?

The study of institutions became political when it concerned with power resources, how to distribute and use these resources, and what the effects of that distribution and use on social agents, agencies, and institutions. To understand this process, we can start with identifying political institutions that exist within one social community. The “old” or “traditional” institutionalist were focus on formal political institutions, such as state, government agencies, formal rules, government structures, and gave little attention to informal conventions and broader institutional constraints on governance (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013, p. 24). This first wave of institutionalism has treated political institutions as independent factors, free from exogenous factors, that shape and influence the organization of political life (March & Olsen, 1984, p. 735). We can observe this on literature studying institutions between 1930s and 1970’s, ranging from economic, organizational, political science, and legal. Guy (1999, p. 6–11; Lowndes and Roberts, 2013, p. 24) summarized the characteristics of old institutionalism as: normative (concerned with “good governance”); structuralist (structures determine political behavior); historicist (the central influence of history); legalist (law plays major role in governing); and holistic (concerned with describing and comparing whole systems of government)

The new institutionalism started to surface in 1980s, mostly in political science, reflecting many features of older version of the approach to understanding politics in theoretical and empirical directions (Guy, 1999, p. 1). The emergence of the new institutionalism can be seen as a response to internal and external challenges (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013, p. 30). Internally, institutionalists sought to develop the theory to respond to the now well-embedded criticisms of “old” institutionalism. Externally, as the global society became more plural and democratized, the organization of politics and government became more complex and fragmented, political scientists need access to more sophisticated theoretical and methodological tools. The new institutionalists saw that political outcomes were no longer determined by formal institutions and rules alone. It insists on a more autonomous role for political institutions by emphasize that the state is not only affected by society, but also affects it; political democracy depends not only on economic and social conditions but also on the design of political institutions; and the formal structure of governance are arenas for contending social forces, but they are also collections of standard operating procedures and structures that define and defend interest (March & Olsen, 1984, p. 738).

In order to get clear differentiation between old and new institutionalism, Lowndes and Roberts (2013, p. 28–29) compiled it in three important aspects: (1) it started with formal rules and structures, and expanded it concerns to include informal conventions and coalitions that shape political conduct, (2) instead of taking political institutions at face value, it took a critical look at the way in which they embody values and power relationships, and (3) it asserted that institution constraint individual conduct, but also human creations that change and evolve through the agency of actors. Following these assumptions, this article looks on the interactions between informal local leaders and political actors with government agency in conducting the organization of political life as an alternative explanation instead of relying solely on the formal structure. Furthermore, the local political conduct can be understood by examining the wide array of local and cultural wisdoms that endure in one society as a substitute guiding principle to formal rules. And finally, local informal leaders can act as a social force that behave appropriately within formal rules and local government structure or actors to conduct their governance in cultural and historical appropriateness.
3. Local politics and elite democracy

Elite democracy, as an alternative to the regulation of the political system, when compared to the model of liberal democracy or oligarchy, offers the idea of reconciliation. Elite democracy, or also called the elite deliberative, is one of the four main theories of democracy: competitive democracy, elite deliberation, participatory democracy, and deliberative democracy (Fishkin, 2009, p. 65–85). First formulated by Joseph Schumpeter, elite democracy maintains the argument that representative government, although filled by elitist models, can still reconcile with democratic principles (Barker, 2013, p. 548). This view wants to reconcile between elitist model settings, which in principle contradict the liberal democratic model that chooses government directly, competitively, and openly. Democracy, which refers to governance based on general will, as Rousseau formulated, is impossible to achieved according to the views of elite democracy. This contrasts with the theory of participatory democracy that says that broader citizen participation is a fundamental principle for the legitimacy of democracy. As noted earlier, some studies of Indonesia’s political, economic and social conditions after the New Order were dominated by elitist perspectives, while at the same time Indonesia succeeded in running an open and direct electoral democracy system for almost 20 years. In the perspective of democratic theory, this phenomenon shows the fundamental problems between elitist and liberal model governmental regulations, which have begun since the beginning of election, and which of the two models has more valid democratic legitimacy.

If we look at the phenomenon of democratic transitions in several countries, which were previously dominated by authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, the main problem lies in the issue of regulating the authority of legitimate power in a social polity and what kind of governance model to use. The participatory democracy model says that direct and broad citizen participation in the decision-making process is fundamental to the legitimacy of democracy (Balderacchi 2016). Roberts (in Balderacchi 2016) implicitly shows that political legitimacy is determined by the accountability of a government chosen from popular election results, shifting from an elitist model of government that does not provide sovereign space for individuals to engage independently and freely in the decision-making process. However, both theoretically and empirically, the phenomenon of political regulation that is elite legitimacy in a democratic system remains inevitable. This has long been anticipated by many academics, one of them by Joseph Schumpeter, in Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy, which offers elite democratic theory. In addition, Federalist Papers (1788) also offers ideas on a model of representative government arrangements that can coexist with democratic principles.

Thus, the elitist model of democracy offers a procedure that allows peaceful competition and is open to elite groups to fight for government power (Winthrop, 2007). This model does not mean turning off the aspirations and sovereignty of individuals to be involved in the decision-making process or dwarf the role of the majority group that is governed by minorities. Barker (2013) says that a model of representative governance within the framework of elite democracy can still gain legitimacy popularly if (1) is able to establish an accountable institutional regulation system; (2) providing general elections as a control instrument for minority elite groups and at the same time as an arena of open competition between factions in a plural social institution. Hypothetically, the strengths and weaknesses of the legitimacy of elitist government within the framework of elite democratic theory will be largely determined by the extent of the role of citizens and civil society and the extent of the control of citizens against elitist governance. On the contrary, the legitimacy of elitist government democracy will be largely determined by the government’s ability to manage and distribute resources, maintain government accountability in a sustainable manner, and ensure individual sovereignty in the decision-making process through certain mechanisms.

On the other hand, empirically, Indonesian Studies after the New Order shows the emergence of symptoms of regulation of the oligarchic government, especially in regions that are rich in natural resources (Robison and Hadiz, 2004). The results of Robison and Hadiz’ study show that key determinants of the way personal wealth and social strength can be accumulated and distributed
lie in the control of government and official authority. Winters (2011) has the same view regarding material wealth as the main capital of regulating the oligarchic government. The oligarchic model of a government according to Winters was only contested by a small group of people who have an enormous accumulation of material wealth. Other power resources, such as formal political forces, official positions of government, coercive power, and the ability to mobilize the masses are elite power resources that cannot be used in the oligarchy logic. However, a number of studies have begun to show a trend towards micropolitical studies with a case study approach to explore typical models of local governments in Indonesia, especially using oligarchy theoretical framework. Some studies confirm Robison and Hadiz' and Winters' thesis, while others argue or produce new findings that has to be followed up as objects of research.

Seeing the widespread literature discussing elite politics, local politics, and elite democracy, this article tries to limit its writing to a micro perspective with a case study approach model. Following the Schumpeterian model’s elite democratic conceptual framework, this article argues that, first, the model of representation/government, despite being dominated by elite groups, can still coexist with democratic principles. Second, contrary to the basic assumption of oligarchic theory (Winters, 2011), the resources of power of local politics in Indonesia and the fight over them are not always dominated by material resources and not always full of oligarchs. To arrive at the conclusion, this article will present the results of interviews and focus group discussions with a number of informants in Gorontalo Province; dig up information from secondary historical sources; and follow the development and social dynamics of the Gorontalo community through various news sources. The selection of Gorontalo Province as a case study was carried out to support the two arguments above: that the province, city, and district governments in Gorontalo ruled alongside the Cultural Council in certain situations. Second, Gorontalo is one of the provinces that do not have the abundance of natural resources that could be contested by oligarchs, so it becomes an interesting subject to study in the context of power struggles between the elite groups there.

4. Methodology
Using new institutionalist framework, this study revisits the link between democratization and decentralization that creates the blossoming of new autonomous local government. This article uses a case study method to understand the phenomenon of elite democracy in Indonesian micropolitics. Lowndes and Roberts (2013, p. 30–34) suggested that sociological institutionalism, as one strand in new institutionalism, undertakes case studies of specific organizational fields to produce thick description using interpretive methodologies. There are some empirical works using case studies to inform the new institutionalism discussion about the phenomena related to institutions dynamics. Recently, Berencshot and Mulder (2019) studied the regional variation of local governance in Indonesia focusing on local leadership, the strength of civil society, and civic engagement and political accountability as explanation factors. It found that the local governance varies depended on the intensity of clientelistic practices, as well as the degree of state dependency of local economies. Buchenrieder et al. (2017) stated that, in some local Thailand communities, local leaders employ a subtle paternalistic leadership style as a consequence of the inability of the prevailing cultural practices to promote truly transparent and open discussions as ascribed to participatory governance tools. Choi and Fukuoka (2015) reported that, using a case study in Kebumen, one of the regencies (Kabupaten) in central Java, Indonesia, local elites were using the supports of international aid programs as a new source of power to raise their profile as “reformist”, as well as to consolidate their power in forms of patronage politics.

This article takes a case study in Gorontalo Province in order to explore and understand how local politics conducted in an institutionalist framework. The Gorontalo Province is chosen based on its uniqueness as a province inhabited by 96.7 percent of the Muslim population, 90 percent Gorontalo ethnic group, and as the poorest province in Indonesia based on the statistic reports. The provincial, municipal and district governments run their governments alongside Cultural Council that has rights and influences on the running of government under certain conditions. The provincial and regional governments grant authority to the Cultural Council in several ways, such as the appointment of new officials, control of indigenous people towards morals of
officials, the awarding of cultural prize to outstanding government officials and traditional ceremonies for changing officials. This study used several literatures (Amin 2012a; Hasanuddin and Amin 2012; Moh & Ihsan, 2012) to gather a preliminary insights about local politics, customs and traditions, and cultural and historical facts about Gorontalo. It also surveyed some online articles from official websites and local and national news websites. Informations, insights, and facts that had been collected were used to put Gorontalo’s politics, social, cultural, and historical experiences into a theoretical framework pertaining elite’s struggle over power, local leadership, and democratic governance. It was followed by conducting interview with key informants in order to get an authentic viewpoint about how Gorontalo’s elites and social forces reorganize its political system using democratic institutions in the era of decentralization.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with four figures representing bureaucrats, indigenous people and academics. This choice of participants is meant to gather a different perspective on the same phenomenon, namely how democratic governance can go hand in hand with the interests of indigenous people, led by the Cultural Council, after the enactment of the regional government/regional autonomy law since in 1999. It is also to accommodate the different perspectives on issues that are addressed by governmental institutions, social forces institutions (Cultural Council) that played a significant role as the guardian of local traditions and values, and scholars as neutral institution that regularly generated policy studies and gave conceptual insights based on local culture and history. The selection of the informants was based on their capacity as officials who managed their institutions in the top level of management and their personal and professional experience, for instance as officials who saw the regime changed and adapted into the new form of governance in the era of decentralization. The interviews were conducted using an institutionalist framework to explore and examine the experience of informants in navigating, conducting, and managing their institutions in two different settings of political system, authoritarian and democracy.

To complete the results of the in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with several community leaders who were representing various groups and interests. The FGDs were held to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the distribution of forces/influences between groups in the same setting of place, time, and situation, through narratives built in the FGD process. This FGD setting is used to support the second argument, that is, in micropolitics, power/influence battles do not always occur between oligarchs and do not always aim to fight for material resources, but they also occur at the elite narrative level. The FGD were conducted on selected topics, such as their views on and experiences with leadership, local wisdoms, local institutions and customs, and collective actions. In this setting, we observed how the actors behave using the logic of appropriateness as suggested by the new institutionalist framework.

5. Historical background of Gorontalo’s social institutions
Understanding the regulation of social institutions in the province of Gorontalo can be done by tracing the history of the formation of the kingdom of Gorontalo, the social institutions that have the authority to regulate, the basis of the regulation of social institutions, and the symbols of authority used in social institutions. According to historical records, the Gorontalo kingdom was founded from the merger of seventeen linula (the smallest administrative unit, which was the size of a village), each of which was headed by one head (Bayo et al., 2018, p. 223). The Kingdom of Gorontalo was the result of merging linula and was led by a king who was chosen by a forum. The milestone of Gorontalo’s existence as a kingdom occurred in the 16th century when Gorontalo adopted Islam as an official religion, which was marked when King Amai married Princess Rala Palaso Ogonomjonjo, who was related to the king of Ternate. As an influential Islamic empire in the eastern part of the archipelago at that time, King Amai’s proposal was accepted on the condition that Gorontalo must be islamized and all traditional rules must be sourced from the Al-Quran (Amin 2012b, p. 16).
The adoption of Islam and the determination of the rules of tradition according to the Quran are recorded verbally in the saraa topa-topanga to adati (shari'ah based on tradition) and adati hula-hula to saraa, saraa hula-hula to adati (culture alongside with shari'ah, shari'ah alongside culture) (Amin 2012b, p. 17; Bayo et al., 2018, p. 216). These two expressions suggest that traditional law and Islamic law have a mutually reinforcing position in regulating the lives of the people of Gorontalo (Amin 2012b, p. 17). Initially, cultural positions were viewed higher as a life philosophy and social setting of the people of the Gorontalo kingdom. When King Amai adopted Islam as the official religion of the kingdom, the principle of cultural settings was Syara'a hula-hula'a to Adati (shari'ah “culture”). This principle shifted during the reign of King Matolodulakiki in 1550 AD to adati hula-hula to saraa, saraa hula-hula to adati (culture alongside with shari'ah, shari'ah alongside culture). This shift shows that the principles of culture and religion are equal. Furthermore, in the reign of King Eyato in 1673 AD the principle was perfected into Adati hula-hula’a to Syara’a, Syara’a hula-hula’a to Qur’ani (culture that based on shari'ah, and shari'ah that is based on the Qur'an) (Mah & Ihsan, 2012, p. 181).

The influence of Islam on the cultural administration and social life continues for centuries in Gorontalo, even today. Islamic values are used as the main basis for the regulation of legitimate social institutions by the authorities. In the course of its history, the leadership authority in the social system of the Gorontalo community consists of three elements, which are likened to three ropes: khalifah (king/olonga), kadi (religious leader), bate (Cultural Council) (Interview with Nani Tuloli). Although government life and institutions are based on Islamic laws, in terms of governance, since the Gorontalo kingdom was founded, in the Dutch colonial period, during the republic, and until independence until now, the bate has a significant role, authority and function in many aspects. Bate, which comes from the word “battenn” or a wise person, is in charge of setting tradition, choosing and dismissing kings, forming religious courts, and organizing royal events (Hasanuddin & Amin, 2012, p. 43–44). In carrying out its duties and functions, the bate bases the rules and tools he makes on Islamic Shari’a, such as the pledge of a king/olonga who must swear in the name of Allah before the bate when first ordained after being elected (Hasanuddin & Amin, 2012, p. 45).

The marriage between Islamic values and cultural elements, between kings and elites who help the king control his power can be seen from the hierarchical structure of the Gorontalo kingdom. Historians, traditional leaders, bureaucrats, and academics who were successfully interviewed and a number of secondary historical sources (Hasanuddin & Amin, 2012; Amin 2012a; Bayo et al., 2018) all agree to say that Gorontalo, as a social and cultural institution, was a democratic entity. A form of coexistence of authority between the executive (the executive) and the Cultural Council (legislative and judicial) is seen from the history of the formation of the Gorontalo kingdom. It starts from 17 linula, the election of kings/olonga by bate, the control of the king’s power by the bate, to the authority of the bate to replace the king if he was unable to carry out his duties. Bate members will gather in a discussion forum called bantayo pobaqide to carry out their duties and functions. Bantayo pobaqide, chaired by Ta’uwa, not only symbolizes an elitist social institution that is deliberative but also serves as a control instrument that ensures the king does not have unlimited absolute power. Implicitly, the position of king and bate is parallel even though the legitimacy of the king’s authority is determined by bate. In addition to bate, the king will be assisted by an administration that is hierarchically under the control of the king, filled by nobles, and not infrequently also filled by members of the bate (Hasanuddin & Amin, 2012, p. 41–53). Historically, this model shows that Gorontalo people were accustomed to an elitist and deliberative delegation of authority, although in the course of history the role and function of the king/olonga, the bate, and the royal administration adapted to the different, changing times.

5.1. Accomodating new values or democratizing old institution
The existence of social institutions of the Gorontalo community is based on traditional values and rules, which is maintained continuously by the Cultural Council. The Cultural Council is also able to maintain its existence and coexistence with government institutions where cultural rules and
values began to be separated from the kingdom's government since the colonial period. All historical sources and the results of interviews with each interviewee said that the values and rules of tradition as a source of social institutions in the Gorontalo community were passed down orally through *tujai/tujae* (wise words; traditional poetry; proverbs; noble expressions) and practiced for generations in traditional ceremonies. In the form of utterances or daily practices, culture is created to regulate the relationship of behavior between individuals, families, communities and migrants. In addition, culture is also used to regulate the relationship between humans and nature with the assumption that nature is an active entity in the relationship. This setting is contained in behavior in the form of traditional rituals, such as prayers or offerings (Moh & Ihsan, 2012, p. 179–180). This section will explore the cultural values, rules, behavior, and institutions that maintain the continuity and identity of the Gorontalo people in regulating the power of authorities, especially after the enactment of regional government laws since 1999.

Professor Nani Tuloli is one of the most important informants in this study because of the capacity he had as a former rector of the Gorontalo State University who served for three periods. He has extensive experience and knowledge in the field of Gorontalo culture, and he is an academic who has studied the customs and culture of Gorontalo. With such a profile, the Gorontalo community trusted Tuloli to be an advisor for the Cultural Council of the province at the time this study was conducted. To understand the culture of Gorontalo and the leadership model of Gorontalo’s culture and customs, Tuloli said it was necessary for researchers to begin by understanding two things, namely, *adat bersendi syara’* as well as the five traits that form the basis of leadership in Gorontalo culture. In the principle *adat bersendi syara’*, it was said that leadership is controlled by three elements: *khalifah* (governor, mayor, and provincial regent), *kadi* (religious leaders and clerics), and *adat* (Cultural Council). Then, the five personality traits that leaders must possess according to Gorontalo culture are *popoli* (ways of behaving), *ayua* (character from birth), *quaUi* (courtesies/politeness in speech), *amanah* (ability to keep promises), and *tonggowata* (ability to socialize vertically/towards elites and horizontally).

According to Tuloli, the concept of leadership in the Gorontalo community, which is controlled by three elements, is associated with the concept of *trias politica*.

Gorontalo culture brings together political aspects in leadership as well as aspects related to civilization and religious sharia. This is the basis of Gorontalo culture. It is famous for the term “Tiga Utas Talii” or “Three Strings of Rope”. The first rope was formerly called the Caliph (leader). Now, a regent, governor, or mayor, replaces the Caliph. Because in the past (during the Gorontalo Kingdom) people did not recognize or know about these positions, we can translate or interpret, that this rope is now called a governor, mayor, or regent even the sub-district head. The second rope is called religion. There are religious leaders who are called *kadi*. From the beginning until now the *kadi* existed as the traditional leadership, does stand alone, meaning there is an influence from *kadi*. So during policy-making, a governor, mayor and so on must ask the *kadi* whether or not a certain policy is contrary to the *Shari’a* or not. Adat is the third rope. Adat, or in other words, culture and customs, is related to traditional law. So we translate the trias politica into “Tiga Utas Talii” or “Three Strings of Rope” in Gorontalo (Interview: Nani Tuloli).

The concept of trias politica commonly found in the constitutional republic government distributes power in a legitimate manner to the three elements in the government (executive, legislative, and judicial). In the Gorontalo community, especially after the implementation of the regional government law in 1999, the legitimate distribution of power continued to follow the pattern that had been going on since the New Order, namely the executive (governor, mayor, and regent), legislative (People's Representative Council), and judiciary branches (court and attorneys). The roles and functions of the Cultural Council, which were reduced during the New Order era, began to be revitalized since 2012 (4 July 2012). This was marked by the declaration of the founding of Duango *adati lo Hulonthalo* or the Gorontalo Cultural Council, which consisted of 11 experts who were considered to master and understand Gorontalo culture (from Gorontalo Provincial Government’s
Public Relations). However, explicitly, there is no formal function of the Gorontalo Cultural Council according to the concept of trias politica because the legislative role is given to the People’s Representative Council (province, district and city) and the judicial role is given to the prosecutor’s office and the court.

The influence of adat (henceforth, culture) in the government remains visible even though its institutionalization through the Cultural Council has no formal function in government. Another important informant, the Gorontalo District Secretary, Hadijah U. Tayeb, provided an illustration of the position of culture and its influence in the government.

That’s why I said there are no (cultural/traditional laws) that are written, but they are already embedded.

Culture does not intervene directly, but during implementation (the running of the government), there is an influence of culture towards the government.

Nevertheless, in the process of elections (governors, mayors, and regents) culture does not interfere. The people choose according to the methods of democracy. However, after the election is finished and a leader/representative is elected, that is when culture enters. It gives the leader color to act in accordance with our tradition. But again, they do not intervene in policy. When the leader acts, they should not cross or go against culture. (If there was) a mistake, it will be seen when the government is in session. Due to the influence of Islamic values, all practices will refer to the Islamic order, instructions, and basis of behavior. There, the influence of culture in government can be observed (Interview: Hadijah).

Hadijah’s statement representing the bureaucratic group seemed more straightforward and explicit on the fact that the Cultural Council did not have a formal function in the government but have some influence on it. Due to the values and teachings of Islam as a reference and the function of culture as a regulator of human relations, it can be seen that culture functions as an instrument and the Cultural Council functions as a non-formal institution of moral control of the leaders. Culture is a source of reference that is passed down orally and through various traditional ceremonial practices, while the Cultural Council gets social legitimacy as a non-formal institution that has the right to correct the behavior of a leader within the framework of traditional values.

In its concrete form, the institutionalization of moral control of leaders by culture, which is carried out by the Cultural Council, can be seen in two traditional ceremonies: the picking up of the newly elected leader and the escorting of the leader who has finished his/her duty; and giving traditional titles to leaders according to their work performance. No elected leaders (governor, mayor, and regent) are allowed to run their sectors of the government if they have not been picked up from his home and escorted to his official/work residence in the Moloopu traditional ceremony.

Every leader who leads Gorontalo will be subject to certain events. The first event is the traditional coronation. The traditional coronation provided a basis that he/she, even though he/she was not from Gorontalo, is treated as if he/she was considered a native of Gorontalo. So, he/she receives cultural acceptance in a traditional sense.

Second, the leader is subject to a pick-up event. He/she will be picked up from his/her residence to the official/work residence, which is sometimes called yiladia. The name yiladia may be a language influence from Aceh or Ternate. So, he/she will be picked up traditionally, provided with traditional clothes, with guards that practice traditional martial arts (silat) and so on. Even his/her mother will also be provided traditional clothes and other traditional symbols.
Thirdly, the leaders will be paraded traditionally, and then they will be sat down traditionally with those I have mentioned previously: the head/religious figure and traditional figures called bate. The term bate may be an influence from South Sulawesi, “Baate-baate nah”, which means traditional figures. Now he/she must sit together, not above, not under. If there is a rug, he must sit on a rug, parallel and equal to the others. Because of that, what I said earlier was the “Three Strings of Rope” were united in one leadership position and one leadership formation. (Interview: Nani Tuloli)

After going through moloopo, or the traditional process of being picked up, then a leader is considered worthy of running the government because he has gained legitimacy from cultural and religious leaders. Meanwhile, if a leader is elected a second time (democratically through the election of a regional head/Pilkada) or re-occupy his/her position as Governor in the second period then he/she will be subject to a traditional ceremony mopobonelo. Mopobonelo was held in May 2017 to appoint Rusl Habibie as Gorontalo’s Governor for the second term of his administration after he won the elections in February 2017 (Public Relations of Provincial Government of Gorontalo). Whereas when a leader completes his duties, he will undergo a modepito traditional ceremony. Modepito is a ceremony to bring a leader back to his personal home. The series of ceremonies of moloopo (or mopobonelo) and modepito shows the existence of a non-formal but very binding authority that the Cultural Council possesses.

The second ceremony, which shows the existence of moral control the Cultural Council has on the government, is the pohutu momulanga ceremony (giving traditional titles Ipalunga). This is performed on leaders based on their work achievement. Moh and Ihsan (2012) has carried out an extensive discussion of the pohutu momulanga ceremony. This ceremony is performed not only to give appreciation to leaders from the community represented by the Cultural Council but also as a symbolic forum that warns leaders to keep maintaining the trust (tuwango lipu) that the people have given them. This ceremony is sacred because the warning given to the leader is a consequence of the oath recited by a leader when he/she is appointed after he/she was elected through the election. Every leader in Gorontalo will take the oath before the Cultural Council to run the government as best as possible based on traditional and Islamic values. If this oath is violated, the people of Gorontalo believe that leaders will suffer from bad karma and will be ostracized by the community. In addition, if the violation is considered to be very severe, the Cultural Council will deliberate and ask the leader to resign from his/her position (Interview: Hadijah).

The revitalization of the Cultural Council in 2012, which was accompanied by various traditional ceremonial practices within the scope of the formal government, showed an effort to adapt traditional values towards the values of modern democracy. This adaptation can be seen from the efforts of cultural group leaders representing the baete limo lo pohalaa (five cultural leaders) to put alongside, the position of the Cultural Council towards the formal government using historical justification of traditional values. Although it takes a long time for the Cultural Council to be revived since the implementation of the regional government law in 1999, the existence of the Cultural Council alongside the formal government shows that the traditional values and its accompanying instruments are proven to exist in the Gorontalo community. In a condition of political openness and active local politics, Gorontalo’s traditional elite group managed to convince the formal government that democratic values must go hand in hand with traditional cultural values. The Gorontalo Cultural Council, as a representation of the community of the five culture groups (baete limo lo pohalaa/five cultural leaders), is an institution that is kept elitist by the descendants of the kingdom of the five regions in Gorontalo. The influence of this aristocratic elite group remained strong in society and proved to be able to function alongside the formal government using historical justifications of traditional values. Thus, the model of representative governance/traditional representative in Gorontalo is represented by the traditional leaders of baete limo lo pohalaa and the discussion
forum called 

*bantayo poboqide*. Although controlled by an elite group of aristocrats, the cultural representative of Gorontalo can still co-exist with the principles of democracy that are guaranteed constitutionally by the nation.

6. Local traditional elite without oligarchs

Winters (2011) said that a simple way to distinguish oligarchic theory from the elite is to identify the types of power and influence produced by the power sources owned by minority groups in terms of material. Winters, drawing from the power resource theory formulated by Walter Korpi, mentioned five types of power resources that individuals can have: formal political rights, official positions in government and non-government, coercive power, mobilization power, and material power (Winters, 2011, p. 18–30, 2013, p. 13). The first four resources are exclusively distributed and are highly concentrated in certain groups, and they are known as the political elite. On the other hand, the fifth resource becomes the basis for oligarchic theory (Winters, 2013, p. 13). If it starts from the fifth resource, namely material resources, Gorontalo does not own abundant and rich natural resource potential as a source of the oligarch's contestation. According to historical records, Gorontalo once owned a gold mine and was explored by the colonial government. Other than gold, Gorontalo is also famous for rattan commodities and has several coffee plantations as a legacy of the colonial forced cultivation policies (Hasanuddin & Amin, 2012, p. 70–73). However, these commodities are no longer the main source of income for large-scale entrepreneurs nor are they the source of livelihood for the community today.

In an interview with Basri Amin, an academician and historian who wrote the Gorontalo history book from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Gorontalo State University, he said that:

*We do not have industries. This is easy (to prove), sir, try to walk in the harbor. The containers brought home are almost empty. You just stand there for an hour and see how many trucks pass (Interview: Basri Amin).*

Amin’s statement reinforces the fact that almost no natural resource-based commodities or industrial products are produced by the Gorontalo economy. Another surprising fact is that the Gorontalo Province is at the bottom three of the Human Development Index (HDI) in Indonesia (Central Statistics Agency 2018). Thus, in the context of power struggles, elites or individuals who want to compete politically must seek other power resources that can be utilized to win political battles.

The lack of material resources as a factor and source of power in Gorontalo does not weaken the spirit of competition to control formal and non-formal authorities. This does not mean that the research on which this article was based on will detail four other resources according to Winters. The task will be a separate research work because it requires different perspectives and designs. In this article, it will be discussed how the role of culture, which is formally institutionalized through the Cultural Council and revitalized in various traditional rituals, influences the formal government, which is constitutionally regulated and led by people through a competitive election. To examine the influence of culture on the formal government, this research has difficulties and limitations in the collection of data that is not only very geographically dispersed but also has demographically large numbers. At the same time, one must note that the phenomenon of traditional ceremonies is randomly occurring. However, this study tries to construct a setting that represents the elements of Gorontalo society at one time through limited focus group discussions. This research setting aims to limit the testing of cultural influence on the formal government or other community institutions in a discursive/narrative manner.

Seven informants who represent the five elements of society attended the FGD: Chairperson of the Gorontalo Province Cultural Council, Gorontalo Province Indonesian
Ulama (Religious) Council, academicians, journalists, the general public, and bureaucrats. The FGD proposes five main statements from literature reviews and the results of in-depth interviews with several informants. Nani Tuloli represents the advisor of the Gorontalo Province Cultural Council as an informant who is always the first to give answers, responses and comments. Tuloli provided comprehensive and extensive answers and responses, in accordance with his capacity as an advisor to the Cultural Council, professors in cultural sciences, researchers in the fields of oral and philological traditions, and former Gorontalo State University Rector for three periods. With a profile like this, Tuloli often dominates the FGD with answers, responses, and comments. In addition, other informants looked very respectful towards Tuloli and were reluctant to speak earlier than Tuloli. One of the informants conveyed the public respect for Tuloli:

> Young people cannot talk before older people. Ha ha ha. (It is the) structure, sir. Ha ha ha. Whatever is emphasized by seniors, we follow (Abdurahman Abubakar, Chairperson of the Gorontalo Province Ulama Council).

In terms of content, the other informants agree towards almost all of the information conveyed by Tuloli. Symbolically, Tuloli represents cultural institutions and dominates the FGD process. Additionally, the constructed narratives do not get a significant denial. If viewed from a critical perspective, the information obtained from the process is relatively homogeneous without any dynamics. Implicitly, the structure of the relationships that are built in a process like this also does not describe the distribution of power and authority of the trias politica model, which is equal between the bureaucracy of the government, religion/kadi, and culture/bate.

The content of answers, responses, and informant comments reveals how culture influences formal government or other institutions of the community in a discursive/narrative manner. The first question is how the informants responded to the separation of Gorontalo Province from North Sulawesi Province. Tuloli’s response contained the cultural identity of the Gorontalo people, which was rooted in tradition and passed down orally through folklore in the form of expressions of wisdom. The second response was from Mahludin H. Baruwadi, Vice Rector of the Education and Student Affairs of Gorontalo State University. Mahludin said that the main reason for Gorontalo’s secession from North Sulawesi was the motive of identity politics. Gorontalo people feel that they are “second class” citizens under the Minahasa ethnic group in many ways: in terms of the government, economy, education and culture. The third opinion was from the Chair of the Cultural Council, Karim Patepa. Again, his response was based on the history of the formation of the Gorontalo kingdom, which is drawn from traditional wisdom as well as Islamic teachings and values. Two responses were observed to use cultural and historical factors while one response utilized identity politics to explain the reason for Gorontalo’s secession from the North Sulawesi Province. Nevertheless, Karim Patepa added that the cultural identity of the Gorontalo people could not be separated from the influence of Islamic values.

The second question asks informants to provide their views on the relationship between the implementation of local government laws and the state ideology, Pancasila. All informants agreed to say that Pancasila is the proper ideology for the multicultural Indonesian people. The history of Gorontalo noted that there were no disputes between ethnic groups in Gorontalo. Community issues can be solved by means of discussion with their cultural leaders. The third question asks the informants about the branding of the province of Gorontalo as Serambi Medinah (being comparable to Medina, a holy city in Saudi Arabia). The FGD cannot reveal exactly when the term Serambi Medinah is used as the nickname or branding of Gorontalo province. Tuloli explicitly said that the use of Serambi Medinah as a nickname signaled the desire of the Gorontalo people to imitate the leadership of the prophet Muhammad when he was a government leader in Medina. This leadership model remains integrated with cultural values and is used as a set of basic values for a leader in Gorontalo.
However, it still must (the leadership model) be colored by the traditional values that apply here. Therefore, it does not always have to imitate the Middle Eastern culture. We must keep returning to local values (FGD: Nani Tuloli).

The informants gave additional explanations about cultural practices and habits of the community based on Islamic teachings, for example, the tradition of the community telling the events of Isra’ Mi’raj in each mosque from night to the morning without reading any text to help him recall the events.

Furthermore, in the FGD, we asked the informant to respond to whether there was a potential conflict between ethnic groups in Gorontalo and if there was a way to solve the problem. Tuloli said that Gorontalo culture was an instrument and mechanism that would stem the potential for conflict between ethnic groups in Gorontalo. As a community that tends to be homogeneous in terms of ethnicity and religion, the people of Gorontalo are attached to the sacredness of traditional values based on Islamic teachings. Second, the Gorontalo community respects elders and cultural leaders who also function as supervisors in the event of various violations and misconduct of the members of the community and leaders. The elders and cultural leaders will give a warning to leaders and the members of the community if they find fault. If there is a potential conflict that is imported from outside the Gorontalo community, then the cultural leader/ibate will conduct a consultation in the bantayo poboqide forum to solve it. This shows that the Gorontalo people have culture as a moral base. Additionally, there is a cultural leaders’ forum, which acts as a supervisory institution and an authority that can anticipate and resolve conflicts.

The last section asks informants to respond to the results of a study, which found that Gorontalo was governed by elitists’ control from certain family groups (familism political dynasty). All informants denied the findings of the aforementioned study by saying that the researchers did not understand Gorontalo culture in a comprehensive and in-depth manner.

Look, sir, it is not controlled by a regime, but they really have Islamic kinship, Ohala. So do not translate Ohala as regime, (it is) obviously different.

Different, it is different. Maybe they do not know Gorontalo language, sir. Indeed, if we translate it to Indonesian, Ohala means family, but family in the Gorontalo context and the dictionary are clearly different.

So maybe the term might be misinterpreted. There might be a somewhat mistaken connotative meaning (FGD: Tuloli).

But when I see, sir, because Gorontalo does not have a monarchy system, then these family regimes may be a bit far from the meaning of family regime in a political sense or we do not find this here (FGD: Pateda).

Tuloli’s and Pateda’s statements are in line with the initial explanation that the Gorontalo community has culture as a control of the leaders’ power. Cultural rules also say that a king was chosen, crowned, controlled, handed down, and sent home after being assigned by the bantayo poboqide forum. Historically, bantayo poboqide was a representation of a collection of the five major kingdoms in Gorontalo and gained legitimacy to establish customs, choose and dismiss kings, form religious courts, and organize royal events (Hasanuddin & Amin, 2012, p. 43–44).

7. Elite deliberation with non-material power resource
Gorontalo’s people tended to choose a deliberate way of democracy to govern itself in the era of decentralization in which each region has full autonomy to reorganize its political system democratically. Local government of Gorontalo from province, municipal, to districts, that had been elected popularly through direct election (pilkada), accommodated checks and balances
mechanism that proposed by social forces institutionalized in Cultural Council. It is an extra-
government institution that that had been entrenched culturally and historically for hundred
years of Gorontalo’s people life. The Council had been granted a wide array of authorities, from
governor inauguration to policy recommendation. The checks and balances function and the
recommendations have always been done by using Gorontalo’s indigenous values that reappropri-
ated into the modern daily life with democratic institutions. Empirical observations show that
indigenous values are more appropriately described as complementary rather than substitutive
because the state constitution does not provide space for culture to replace or even intervene in
the mechanism of regulating government authorities in the regions. However, in this observation,
the practice of everyday life of the people of Gorontalo tends to adhere more to traditional
values. This compliance is found subtly in verbal actions and expressions where behaviors that
are against tradition will produce negative consequences. Such a policy arises because of the
mixing of traditional values with religious teachings.

The life of the people in Gorontalo provides an example of a case of the ongoing practice of
regulating authority that combines culture with the state’s formal rules based on the constitution.
The Gorontalo community through cultural leaders restored their traditional values and practices,
which had previously oppressed during the New Order era. This restoration was mobilized in an
elitist manner by cultural leaders by reviving the Cultural Council in 2012 and influencing regional
governments (provinces, cities and districts) to involve culture into the government through the
application of several traditional ceremonies. This elitist step of cultural leaders is successful in
influencing the formal government and has been recognized by bureaucrats. By looking at the
character of the community and its leadership model, which tends to be democratic and delib-
erative, the coexistence of cultural values with democratic values in the people of Gorontalo will
last a long time. The success of traditional leaders in reviving traditional institutions and influen-
cing local government is also inseparable from their ability to choose the correct strategy in their
narrative, rather than using the approach of material power. This is in line with Winters (2011) who
said that understanding of the political elite cannot be achieved by only looking at material
resources, but it is possible by looking at formal political rights, official positions in government
and non-government institutions, coercive power, mobilization power, and material power
(Winters, 2011, p. 18–30, 2013, p. 13). These four non-material resources are exclusively distrib-
uted and are highly concentrated in certain groups, and these groups are known as the political
elite. On the other hand, material resources form the basis of oligarchic theory (Winters,
2013, p. 13).

This article finds that traditional leaders in Gorontalo tend to use traditional values, teachings
and local wisdom as ideational or ideological resources that have existed for centuries in the
Gorontalo community compared to other non-material resources such as those detailed by
Winters. Traditional ideological power in the Gorontalo community comes from the marriage of
values, teachings, and local wisdom with Islamic values and teachings since the 16th century.
Historical records and explanations from informants show that culture and Islam do not have
differences in principle, as they are very flexible and tend to be universal. The similarity of
principles can be seen in the virtue of values that must be possessed by a leader: having a good
attitude, being polite, being trustworthy, and being able to socialize. The flexibility of culture and
Islam can also be seen from its ability to survive for centuries in various changes and dynamics of
social transformations, models of government, and models of state. Culture that is based on
Islamic teachings is still maintained proportionally and continuously using oral tradition techni-
quies in the form of expressions of wisdom as well as various practices of traditional ceremonies.
The universality of culture and Islam is seen in its ability to adapt to an ideology that goes along
with changes and dynamics of the times, and different models of government and the state. This
adaptive nature does not rise by itself but is controlled in an elitist and deliberative manner by
cultural leaders.
The above findings are in line with Winters' power distribution theory (Winters, 2011, p. 12–13) that said that the ideological or cultural power resources are very powerful, systemic, and almost invisible. As a macro study of social and political conditions in Indonesia after the New Order, Winters prefers to place ideological power resources in the footnotes of his book and place four non-material power resources in a more important position. Instead, using a micro case study approach, this article finds that in certain regions, Indonesian society groups exhibit the power of ideological or ideational resources through traditional values, teachings and wisdom. These resources are generally found in the form of oral traditions (folklore), such as expressions of wisdom, proverbs, indigenous poetry, and traditional rituals.

The second finding of this article is the tendency of cultural leaders as elite groups to conquer the indigenous narrative sources as a normative basis and source for regulating human relations and the relationship of humans with nature. This study hardly found a printed source that holistically and comprehensively contains the tujai/tujae or Gorontalo traditional wisdoms. Contemporary printed sources generally only contain excerpts of traditional saying/tujae taken from interviews with cultural leaders. Critically, this indicates that traditional leaders have a systematic mechanism that is passed from generation to generation to maintain oral tradition techniques in continuing and disseminating local wisdom in managing their society. In addition, the foundation of Islamic values and teachings referenced by culture also becomes a strategic advantage for cultural leaders to control the critical behavior of their communities. People will be afraid to criticize traditions based on religious values because of their dogmatic nature and superstitious character.

Using the above findings, epistemologically, this article recommends subsequent research to use ethnographic recording methods to obtain data on oral traditions (poetry, tujai/tujae, and other expressions of wisdom) and recordings of various traditional ceremonies or rituals. Such a series of data will enrich researchers' understanding of the realm of cognitive/ideational realm of the Gorontalo people who are very obedient to their traditional rules. This will lead researchers to reveal, in an ontological manner, the meaning of adat (culture) as a whole in the life of the people of Gorontalo.

8. Conclusions
The life of the people in Gorontalo provides an example of a case of the ongoing practice of regulating authority that combines culture with the state’s formal rules based on the constitution. It confirms the new institutionalists assumptions that The Gorontalo community through cultural leaders restored their traditional values and practices. This article concludes that the model of representative government in Gorontalo can be seen in the marriage of interests between indigenous elites with the interests of local leaders who are elected through the mechanism of direct local elections (pilkada). This marriage-of-interests model seems very simple because there is a demarcation of the formal, institutional, and physical space between the regional government headed by governors, mayors, or regents, with indigenous groups represented by cultural councils and institutions. However, behind this simple separation, the relationship between these two institutions shows complexity. First, regional leaders need cultural/traditional legitimacy to be accepted by the community before starting their work after being elected. Second, the Cultural Council will control the behavior of regional leaders through traditional ceremonies by giving them traditional titles for the regional leaders' achievements. The level of prestige or degree gained by regional leaders will have an impact on their acceptability in the community and the extent to which the community trusts its government. These two things implicitly indicate a deliberative effort by elite groups to be involved in the decision-making process of the local government. This deliberative effort also shows that the cultural mechanism is carried out by elite figures and cultural leaders who can coexist with democratic principles.
The efforts of cultural leaders’ elite groups influence the local government. This is carried out by using ideological power resources derived from traditional values, teachings and wisdom. The Gorontalo culture that is based on Islamic values and teachings are very strong in controlling the behavior of the people and leaders of regional government. As a large source of power, culture must be controlled in terms of its distribution, meaning and development. Cultural leaders control culture in an elitist manner using oral tradition techniques. Traditional sayings/tujae is maintained through generations by using oral techniques and is practiced in various traditional ceremonies. In a model where people live in an area without an abundance of natural resources or other material potentials as a source of power that can be controlled by elites or oligarchs, ideological power resources become the main instrument that must be controlled by elite groups.

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Author details
Reynaldo de Archellie1
E-mail: archellie01@gmail.com
Munawar Holil2
E-mail: munawar.holil@ui.ac.id
Adrianus Waworuntu3
E-mail: adri.waworuntu@gmail.com

1 Area Studies, Fakultas Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia.
2 Literature Studies, Fakultas Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia.
3 Area Studies, Fakultas Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia.

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Hadjah U. Tayeb, Gorontalo District Secretary. Gorontalo, 8 July 2018.
Nani Tuloi, advisor to the Cultural Council, professors in cultural sciences, researchers in the fields of oral and philological traditions, and former Gorontalo State University Rector for three periods. Gorontalo, 7 July 2018.