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Collective Identity and Protest Tactics in Yogyakarta Under The Post-Suharto Regime

ABSTRACT:

In response to an uncertain political situation, since 1998, Yoyakartans have engaged in resistance through groups called indigenous organizations. Such groups reproduce existing cultural resources as part of a broader movement to oppose democratization reforms that have been raised by the central government. Based on interviews, fieldwork and newspaper reports, this study finds that: (1) collective identity can be understood in different ways from political and cultural perspectives, and indigenous groups are part of the "deep cultural resources" that establish collective identity; (2) such organizations use cultural resources in ways that conform to social movement theory; and (3) the existence of indigenous groups contributes to shaping and reshaping the activities of the movements in which they participate.

Keywords: social movement, collective identity, protest tactics, liberal democracy.

INTRODUCTION

Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (DIY), has special political status in Indonesia equivalent to the provincial level. More precisely, it enjoys a special status as the cultural center of Java and as a continuation of the Mataram Kingdom, which continues to be ruled by a hereditary Sultanate. The Sultan rules as both a cultural figure and a political leader and,

since 1945, has been appointed automatically as Governor. This non-elected Governor is a reward for the Sultanate's historical role in Indonesia's revolution and independence. This region remains very unique, well known as a cultural city and university town, as well as a place of interaction between the modern and traditional (Nakamura 1984), since Javanese-Hindu religions have mixed with modernist Islamic groups to produce a syncretic 'Javanese' religion as described by Clifford Geertz (1964) and by Woodward (1989).

In Indonesian history, Yogyakarta has been both a Kingdom and part of Indonesia during the Dutch colonial period, the Old Older, the New Order and in the reform movements. The Kingdom of Yogyakarta played a key role in opposing and fighting against the colonizers to gain independence of Indonesia. In the Old Order era, Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX negotiated the social and political changes at foot during the earliest stages of independence by providing full support to the founding of the Republic of Indonesia. Since Yogyakarta was considered autonomous by the Dutch, the Sultan "requested" Sukarno to grant independent and sovereign status to the Kingdom, and such special status was enshrined in the Charter of Sukarno's Determination dated October 16, 1945 (Woodward, 2010).

As a result of Java and Yogyakarta's special political status, the image of Javanese communities deteriorated in the eyes of non-Javanese. Suharto's leadership style, in line with Javanese tradition, was thick with mystical rituals and

traditions intended to perpetuate his power, which fed on the syncretic Javanese religion, combining the teachings of Javanese indigenous religions with those of Hinduism and Islam (Geertz 1976; Anderson 1984 ; Woodward 1989:199-201). William Liddle has found that the role of the Palace and Sultan in Yogyakarta's regional development is significant and cannot be overlooked (Liddle, *Kompas* 2/7/2011).

Unlike Fukuyama (1992), who believes the history of government will end with a system of liberal democracy, Faith (2006) in his book *Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* states that parliamentarian democracy (which is understood as liberal democracy) failed to be implemented during the Sukarno Era in Indonesia. The failure of liberal democracy contributes to popular beliefs in and advocacy for local traditions and culture, regardless of whether such local systems are democratic or undemocratic. Freedom and peace appear in such cases to be goals that motivate people more than an abstract concept of democracy.

From above explanation, this paper aims to examine how the process of collective identity building among social movement organizations, participants, and audiences in Yogyakarta played out during protest events. The relationship between collective identity and collective action is a puzzle that is closely examined in this paper.

RESEARCH METHODS

The data analyzed in this study are derived from interviews and fieldwork conducted during the peak of the protest movement in 2011. About 30 protest participants and leaders were interviewed in formal and informal conversations. Following Goodwin et al. (2004), I employed in-depth inter-

views so as to gather more systematic information about the emotions and strategies of leaders. This type of methodology is generally described as participant observation, that is, talking with people to study the everyday emotional culture of a social movement (Goodwin, Jasper, Polleta, 2004: 424). To supplement the data from these interviews, I also collected data from national and local newspaper reports. Selected data were then coded and interpreted to answer questions concerning the processes of collective identity and protest tactics from 2003-2012. also what is the nature of the relationships between social movement organizations (SMOs) and indigenous groups.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Social movements can be defined as instances of collective action, whether they are led and motivated by economic or class-consciousness or other causes like identity and civil rights. The first case is an example of early social movements that arose mostly in Europe, while the latter are exemplified by more recent social movements. A common assumption underlying this definition is that, "shared grievance and generalized belief (loose ideologies) about the cause and possible means of reducing grievance are important precondition for the emergence of a social movement" (McCharty and Zald 1977:1214). Nonetheless, participants have their own rationality to participate or not in movement activities. Additionally, social movements or collective action involve components such as constituents, adherents, and beneficiaries; proponent and opponent (McCharty and Zald 1977); protagonist and antagonist groups (counter movements), and audiences (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994); resources; social movement organiza-

tions (SMOs) (McCharty and Zald 1977; McAdam 1982); leadership (Tarrow); tactic and strategy (Tilly 2008; McAdam; Levitsky). A social movement organization (SMO) is a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goal with the preference of a social movement or a counter-movement and attempts to implement those goals (McCharty and Zald 1977: 1218).

Protesters typically need a so-called 'common enemy.' Additionally, in the framing process, collective action has three functions which are "diagnostic," "prognostic," "and motivational" (Snow and Benford 1998). Meanwhile Gamson more focuses on "injustice," "agency," and "identity." Collective identity is form of "collective representation" (Durkheim). For this study, I wish to expand upon Melucci's notion of identity (1989: 34-5), as quoted below:

"Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientations of their action as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their action take place. The process of constructing, maintaining, and altering a collective identity provides the basic for actors to shape their expectation and calculate the costs and benefit of the action ... collective identity is thus a process in which actors produce the common cognitive frameworks that enable them to assess their environment and to calculate the cost and benefit of their action. They definition which they formulate are in part the result of negotiated interaction and relationships of influence and in part the fruit of emotional recognition."

Taylor and Whittier (1992) examine the processes by which collective identity is constructed and contested to reach goals of a protest movement. Movements may broaden or tighten aspects of identity, which may be unavoidable by design or may involve the invention of new traditions, such as the creation of hip-hop using Javanese language, or the use of ritual ceremonies during protest events. The construction of collective or shared identity itself can be done by using multilevel and diverse activities such as public discourse through talk, framing process, narrative, interaction among others, media, storytelling and legitimate cultural activities (Hunt and Benford 2004: 445). Additionally, collective identity itself is a requisite component for collective action, and they may grow from each other (Hunt and Benford 2004: 450-1) due to the importance of solidarity, commitment and emotional ties among protest participants.

Hunt and Benford (2004) have defined collective identity as the conceptions by which individuals identify themselves collectively in cognitive, emotional, and moral terms. Rooted in and shaped by particular socio-cultural contexts, collective identities are produced and reproduced in ongoing interaction between allies, oppositional forces, and audiences, who can be real or imagined. While providing a sense of "We-ness" and collective agency, collective identity likewise creates a sense of "Other" via boundary identification, construction and maintenance. Collective identity is, thus, shared meaning, providing cultural context for planning, enabling, carrying out, and evaluating individual participation and collective actions. In addition, collective identity is the main characteristic of new social movements worldwide, including collective action that may be led by class consciousness or economic concerns.

New social movements that have arisen follow-

ing collapses of authoritarian regimes worldwide tend to follow "identity-oriented paradigms" (Cohen 1985) under the banner of postmodernism or social constructionism (B. Epstein 1990). In line with such theoretical frameworks, Williams (2004) examines shifts among collective movement from bases for economic distribution to new identities, moral concerns, and civil rights issues. For this study, I define new social movements as those that are based in culture and that produce and reproduce new collective identities throughout a framing process or public discourse.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The dynamics of power relations became quite interesting in Indonesia when the New Order government fell on May 21, 1998, amid massive popular and student protests. Yogyakarta, as a center of cultural legitimacy for the rulers, also played a role in supporting reform. The Sultan took part in reforms for democratization, and ultimately the people of Yogyakarta supported the appointment of the Sultan as governor of Yogyakarta. This could be a blessing from the reform. Negotiations are political, and traditions can be justified. The success of popular pressure in maintaining this tradition is often interpreted differently by different groups. One the one hand, it can be seen as a tribute to the historical role of Yogyakarta during periods of revolution and reform. On the other hand, the appointment of the Sultan as governor can be seen as a counterreformation movement.

In Yogyakarta, identity has played an important role in almost every single collective movement, both in building numbers of supporters and participants. Multiple levels of identity are involved, such as individual, societal, organizational identities based on shared beliefs, or identities as framed by elites through media and other instruments. Not surprisingly, collective identity is broadened, tightened, and even reconstructed by design as newly invented traditions for the purpose of effectively gaining the notice of audiences. This is obvious in the case of Yogyakarta, where activists mobilize people regardless the age, religion, and ethnicity.

The creation and reshaping of collective identity for social movements in Yogyakarta are best traced in several ways, and these include internal and external processes. Internal processes are ways in which collective identity is constructed from existing cultural resources, such as shared memories, symbols, myths, values, codes, traditions, and rituals. Since such notions are embedded in the everyday lives of people, they are easily politicized so as to influence them in supporting the goals of a movement.

On the other hand, are forces by which protesters try to appropriate other cultures or social elements as part of their social movement. For instance, the use of electronic social networking tools, blogs, local and national newspaper, and collaborative music that crosses ethnic boundaries. They contribute to the formation of collective identity building for the Yogyanese, Javanese, or "Kawulo Mataram" and they can also frame such new traditions as a new multiethnic identity. This is the form of collective identity which is typically constructed by social movement organization (SMO).

Second, consciousness is how social movement participants define the need for Yogyakarta's special status based on their traditional belief and

FIGURE I: ACTIVITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN YOGYAKARTA

Components	Revolutionary Era (Dutch and Japanese Colonial Eras)	Old Order Era (1945-1965)	New Order Era (1965-1997)	Post-Reform Era (1998-present)
Actors	Ethnic and religious leaders	Educated people	Students, labor leaders, community leaders	Increased diversity: students, educated people, ordinary people
Motivation	Anti-colonial, pro-independence	Anti-state domination; anti-ethnic domination, religious/ethnic-based movement	Economic distribution, political injustice	Identity, culture, moral values, local tradition, anti-capitalism, environmental issues
Tactic/strategy	Indirect, symbolic, boycotts, violence, cooperative	Direct, demonstrations, legislative proposals, cooperative	Indirect, symbolic, ending in violent protests	Direct, cooperative, leafleting
Scale	Regional	Regional	National (1997-8)	Local
Example	Revolution against the Dutch	Anti-communist movement	Solidarity movement for Udin	People of Yogyakarta movement

Source: Adapted from newspaper reports in *Kompas* and *Kedaulatan Rakyat*.

'cultural resources' (Melucci 1995) and, by doing so, they can build support among the public. Based on varying interpretations of cultural heritage, they understand how local traditions will help them to maintain their dignity and prosperity under the Sultinate's rule. Shared identity is one component of social action, which can be internalized through formal and informal educational institutions from generation to generation. Unsurprisingly, protesters come from larger social groups, including highly educated, less well educated, and even uneducated people to support the privileges of Yogyakarta. In addition, indigenous groups have shaped such historical and future consciousness. The past is framed as an ideal, and the future should be modeled on the past. This is a common belief in Yogyakarta. Therefore, every external threat that endangers such traditional beliefs and myths will meet with strong resistance. Moreover, strong social cohesion among members of indig-enous groups allows them to act collectively.

Meanwhile, negotiation requires both direct and indirect strategies to challenge a dominant group, namely, the state. Protesters have their own understandings and beliefs about power relations, democracy, and traditions, and therefore they mobilize a variety of symbols to oppose the central government..

Collective identity is also formed also through emotional and psychological ties. The new collective identity is thus not just Javanese but is construed as a broader, Indonesian community marked by multiethnic groups. Protesters thus bring together both the flags of Yogyakarta and Indonesia during protest events. This makes it clear that they are not a separatist movement, countering the claims of a radical group named "Posko Referendem" that has challenged the central government to get regional freedom (Interview with Posko Referendum volunteer 6/8/

TABLE 2: CHARACTERSITICS OF SMOS IN YOGYAKARTA MOVEMENT 1998-2011

Components	GRY (1998-2008)	Gentaraja (2007-present)	Sekber Gamawan (2010-present)	Posko Referendum (2010-present)
Constituents and Supporters	Rural and village leaders; Ismaya	Rural and village leaders, intellectuals, 67 organizations	Urban workers and communities, 32 organizations and community groups	Rural and traditionalist communities
Identity	People of Yogyakarta	People of Yogyakarta and *Kawulomataram*	*Kawulomataram*, multiethnic identity	Culture-based movement
Goals	Appointed governor, Special privilege	Special privilege, RUUKY (Privilege bill of Yogyakarta)	Special privilege and Appointed Governor/duputy	Appointed Governor/duputy
Tactics/strategies	Civil disobedience	Civil disobedience, cooperative, spiritual	Cooperative with local parliament, extra-parliament, and spiritual	Radical
Protest activities	Demonstrations, mass assemblies, confrontation, terror	Demonstrations, ritual movements, boycotts, leafleting, media framing, symbolic movement	Demonstrations, ritual movements, boycotts, leafleting, media framing, symbolic movement	Ritual and symbolic movement, leafleting
Relationship to the Palace and Sultan	Neutral	Keep a distance, neutral	Relatively close	Close, patron-client relations

Source: Adapted from interviews and newspaper reports from *Kompas* and *Kedaulatan Rakyat*.

2011; Kompas 12/5/2010).

Social movements and protest movements take different forms and employ different tactics, depending on the context. While the state has certain powers to shape and reshape the activities of social movements, we may argue to the contrary that social movements also influence the type of state regime and that they can transform their strategies such that the state acts in ways that are less oppressive.

The table (Figure 1) summarizes the protest tactics and its characteristics of social movements in Yogyakarta Post-Suharto regime.

SMOs are those organizations in a movement that explicitly organize their members. The four SMOs I focus on here are GRY (The People's Movement of Yogyakarta); Gentaraja (United Yogya Movement); Sekber Gamawan (Association for the Special Status of Yogyakarta); and lastly Posko Referendum (Referendum). I then consider

several characteristics among these SMOs, including their main supporters, identities, goals, relationship to the palace, tactics, and strategies.

On the one hand, the diversity and variations in the movements can be seen as strengthening their primary purpose of supporting each other, because together they can reach a broader audience of towns and villages, as well as religious and ethnic groups. Another advantage is that the government cannot easily co-opt such an array of groups having collective-collegial leadership (though there are exceptions where IGs have a centralized leadership that joins with other organizations in the same SMOs). On the other hand, the diversity of these SMOs can alternatively lead to fragmentation and conflict. Gentaraja, for example, is a new SMO that grew from disillusionment with GRY, while the Joint Secretariat of Gamawan was originally part of Gentaraja (Interview with Adji Bancono, 13/8/ 2011) and became its own SMO. This can

TABLE 3: PROTEST EVENTS IN YOGYAKARTA

Date	Protest event Name	Type of tactics	Number of Participants	Organizers and SMOs involved
08/26/1998	Support The Sultan	Mass assembly	100,000 people	Popular masses/unorganized well
03/25/ 2008	The Bill on Yogyakarta	Demonstration	About 10,000	GRY (Gerakan Rakyat Yogyakarta)
12/13/2010	For the Appointed Governor	Public assembly	About 14,000	Gentaraja, SekberGamawan, and others
12/13/2010	Flag at Half Mast	Symbolic resistance	Individuals	N/A
03/1/2011	Symbolic Resistance to Political Parties	Satiricalceremony	70 people	SekberGamawan
03/26/2011	FKY (3 days)	Festival, street art	More than 1,000 each day	Local community groups
05/29/2011	3th of "Mubengbenteng"	Marching, rites	more than 2,000 people	Posko Referendum, KIPER
05/2011	RUUKY bill	Demonstration	70-100	SekberGamawan
05/2011	Permanent Tatto for supporting the privilage of Yogkarta	Symbolic resistance	800	SekberGamawan
05/ 2011	Ritual movement of *Topo pepe*	Traditional ceremony	50-60	Gentaraja
05/4/2011	Declaration of Privilage Yogyakarta	Mass assembly	200	Hamlet Association of Yogyakarta Region
05/12/2011	Appointed Governor	Mass assembly and free public speech		SekberGamawan
05/13/2011	RUUKY and Appointed governor	Demonstration, marching	500	Gentaraja,SekberGamawan
05/27/2011	Yogyakarta special privilege/RUUKY	Rites, cultural movement.	600	Gentaraja, Forinba, SemarSembogo, and Ismoyo

Sources: *Kompas*, *Kadaulatan Rakyat*, personal field notes.

result in detrimental public relations, since discord can be considered as pointing to ulterior political and personal interests among SMO leaders. If so, the public may be reluctant to join in protest.

One radical group that does not use street demonstrations or political negotiation is called Command Post Referendum. They prefer a cultural approach because such activities can not be easily contaminated by political interests. Proponents of this group are militant have strong social relationships and traditional values. The largest protest activities include the *mubeng benteng* (a traditional ceremony of silently circling the palace), an event I witnessed once out of the three times it was held. In the event I saw, thousands of people

participated in the activity, which lasted from noon to 5:00 pm.

It can be seen differences in the characteristics of these SMOs. Every choice has consequences for both supporters and groups of antagonists, including the central government. If certain groups are found to be too pragmatic and political, they may elicit a response in the streets, which would affect the internal dynamics of the SMO itself. The image of the movement is important for the maintenance of continuity and integrity. Demonstrations are framed in terms of new concepts of democracy rather than forms of mass action that display symptoms of a "social disease" or expressions of people who have lost in the struggle for

economic resources. Good public images can win the hearts and minds of people, and negative images can drive them away. GRY is a good example of how the political interests of certain elites have led to the collapse of organization that existed for nearly 10 years.

For a better understanding of protest dynamics, an additional chart summarizing several notable protest events held from 1998 to 2011:

Based on selected data from the local and national newspapers *Kedaulatan Rakyat* and *Kompas* from January 1998 to October 2011, the types of protest events can be summarized below:

TABLE 4: FREQUENCY OF PROTEST ACTIVITIES BY TYPE, JAN. 1998 – OCT. 2011

No	Form of Protest Activity	Total	%
1	Demonstration	75	18,9%
2	Leafleting	97	24,5 %
3	Assembly	34	8,6%
4	Occupation	7	1,7%
5	Art Performance	27	6,8%
6	Confrontation	3	0,7%
7	Public gathering	76	19,2%
8	Ritual gathering	9	2,2%
9	March	69	17,4%
	Total	395	100%

Source: *Kompas* and *Kedaulatan Rakyat.*

Following Tarrow, protest events can be divided into three groups, namely, confrontation, violence, and conventional (1995: 98). Confrontation includes collective action involving large masses of people but which lack violence, such as the occupation, obstruction and forced entry of spaces, as well as radical strikes. Like confrontation, conventional protests are also non-violent, and this category includes petitions, legal action, demonstrations, leafleting, mass gatherings, and public assemblies. Meanwhile, violent protests include looting, riots,

shootings, and so on. In the case of Yogyakarta, the violent events were minor and occurred only in 1998 and 2008, when GRY employed terror against groups that opposed its movement. Kompak has been reported, what McCharthy and Zald (1977: 1218) theory, as a countermovement organization in 2008 and was threatened by many actors at that time (Interviews with Budi Setiawan 7/7/2011; Pambudi 7/16/2011; Wahyu 8/12/2011). They define that a countermovement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population that is opposed to a social movement. An additional type of protest event that does not fit nicely within this framework are so-called cultural events, which serve as a way of delivering the message of protests through rites, festival, shadow puppet shows, traditional village cleansing, and art performances.

From Table 3 above, we can actually see the pattern where the frequency of protest activity increased. From 1998 to 2011, the office of governor of Yogyakarta has continued to be extended by domestic minister without election process. In 1998 the major transition of government nationally had an impact on traditional community responses to save the region from liberal democracy. Each of these extensions was preceded by protest movements supporting the establishment of the Sultan as governor and expressly rejecting an electoral system.

The motivations of participants involved in this movement can be grouped into three categories: motivation founded on past agreements and historical awareness, motivation stemming from feelings of social solidarity, and motivation from emotional ties with the figure of the Sultan as symbolic and ritual leader as well as political leader (Astuti & Palupi in *Kompas* 6/12/2010). If we trace

the reasons for each of these, there is a variety of emotional and psychological roots that lead to strong beliefs in tradition, which are in line with Javanese beliefs in supernatural powers, as Geertz (1964), Anderson (1972), and Woordward (2010) have each found, namely, that power is symbolized by the charismatic figure of Sultan and inheritance as the real power base.

Such traditional beliefs are powerful in Yogyanese communities, and they are taken for granted as undeniable "truth," which can give rise to militants and radical protesters. As Goodwin et al. (2004) argue, the emotional dimension is part of social action but, unfortunately, it is underestimated by many scholars. From the perspective of antagonist groups, they argue that emotional and irrational movements will quickly dissipate because they lack strategy and political calculation while having only a minor political effect. They further criticize that spontaneous protests driven by emotional groups are not worth worrying about, since they are only short-term events (interviews with Budi Setiawan July 17/7/2011 and with Putut 12/8/2011). Nevertheless, such protest movements have declined and reemerged for a decade already. Thus, despite the existence of an apprently "irrational" or "emotional" dimension, participants have built their common beliefs into a movement of collective action, which can be effective precisely because of the emotional content, sense of belonging and primordial sentiments embedded within public beliefs and expressed in everyday life. Thus, cultural or emotional collective action might emerge and reemerge as responses to dominant groups, turning resistance to change into a part of everyday life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, several points can be summarized my findings: (1) a new social movement has emerged in contemporary Indonesia nation wide especially in the post-reform era since 1998, in which cultural resources or what we call local identity have become the basis for mobilizing and framing of collective movements; (2) indigenous groups have been playing an important role in shaping and reshaping both SMOs and the continuity of collective movements; (3) fragmentation on political interests can lead to the decline of a movement, as was the case with GRY and Keris Jati; (4) collective identities are produced and reproduced in a social movement as a continual process of negotiation between different level of politics and voluntary organizations; and (5) such collective actions have been successful in maintaining the privileged status of Yogyakarta by imposing Special Law No.13/2012 (Undang-Undang Keistimewaan DI Yogyakarta).

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