

Jawara on the Stage of Political Power in Banten

¹Davi Dwi Julio, ²Nadia Khumairatun, ³Sultan Nadhifa, ⁴Rafael Kamajaya
⁵Muhammad Daffa Pratama, ⁶Muhammad Wafikurrizky Nugraha, ⁷Silpius Kegiy

^{1,2,3,4}Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Departement of Government Science

^{5,6,7}Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Departement of Government Science

Email: 6670230088@untirta.ac.id, nadia.khumairatun@untirta.ac.id, 6670230076@untirta.ac.id, 6670230012@untirta.ac.id,
6670230133@untirta.ac.id, 6670230015@untirta.ac.id, 6670230153@untirta.ac.id

This researcher investigates the transformation and strategic role of *jawara* as traditional cultural figures who have transitioned into influential political actors within the regional power structure of Banten, Indonesia. Drawing on Michel Foucault's theory of power relations, this research examines how *jawara* negotiate, construct, and sustain power through complex interactions between cultural authority, kinship networks, state institutions, and political dynamics. Employing a qualitative single instrumental case study approach, this study analyzes documentary data, academic literature, historical records, and media sources to uncover patterns of influence embedded in both formal and informal political spheres. Findings reveal that the power of *jawara* in Banten is institutionalized through several mechanisms: genealogical legitimacy rooted in aristocratic titles, the penetration of state elites into cultural organizations, the use of kinship-based networks for electoral mobilization, and the provision of state resources to reinforce dependency. These mechanisms demonstrate that the *jawara's* authority transcends physical or martial strength, evolving into a sophisticated form of socio-political power embedded in historical narratives, cultural symbols, and governance practices. Consequently, the relationship between *jawara* and the state reflects a hybrid political order where traditional authority and modern bureaucracy intersect, reinforcing reciprocal legitimacy and reproducing local elite domination.

Keywords: jawara, Banten politics, power relations, local strongman, patron-client networks, hegemony

This is an open access
article under the [CC BY-
NC](#) license



Corresponding Author:

Davi Dwi Julio

Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Departement of Government Science

6670230088@untirta.ac.id

1. Introduction

Banten has long been recognized as a region with a rich and dynamic socio-political and cultural history. One of the most distinctive elements in Banten's historical narrative is the figure of the *jawara*. The term *jawara* does not merely refer to someone skilled in martial arts but also embodies a figure who is respected, feared, and trusted by the community. Emerging from Banten's strong *silat* (martial arts) tradition, the *jawara's* journey extends far beyond martial prowess. Over time, they evolved into a social institution capable of influencing the direction of community life, transcending cultural boundaries and entering the realms of politics and governance (Athoullah, 2014). Historically of the *jawara* originated from rural communities, where they were regarded as protectors of the people. They often acted as mediators in conflicts, guardians of village security, and figures of moral authority. As time passed, their roles began to intersect with the spheres of politics and power, facilitated by their close relationships with religious elites, local rulers, and government officials (Muslim et al., 2015). From this dynamic emerged a unique phenomenon in Banten: the *jawara's* ability to bridge the world of tradition with that of modern political authority.

The *jawara* symbolize not only physical strength but also social legitimacy. Their charisma positions them as role models and sources of guidance, even in political matters. When the community feels distanced

from bureaucratic structures, *jawara* often serve as intermediaries who are perceived as more attuned to the people's needs. Here lies their true strength the ability to access and influence areas often beyond the reach of formal state mechanisms. From the silat arena, *jawara* transitioned into the political sphere, carrying with them social capital rooted in their closeness to the populace and cultural capital embedded in Banten's identity.

The transformation of the *jawara's* role became increasingly apparent during the era of decentralization. Regional autonomy provided greater opportunities for local actors to participate in politics, and *jawara* emerged as prominent figures within this configuration. Many *jawara* became affiliated with political parties, served as campaign strategists for regional candidates, or even ran as candidates themselves. This marked a new phase in their evolution from traditional figures to members of the political elite who influence regional governance (Bandiyah, 2012). The power relations between *jawara* and the government in Banten reveal a distinctive political character. On one hand, the government relies on the *jawara* for mass mobilization, social stability, and legitimacy. On the other hand, the *jawara* leverage their proximity to the state to gain access to resources, strategic positions, and broader influence. This reciprocal relationship creates a form of symbiosis, though tensions may arise when interests diverge.

This phenomenon is far from simple. In many cases, *jawara* play a decisive role in shaping local political dynamics, influencing both electoral outcomes and public policy. For many Bantenese, *jawara* remain trusted figures whose voices carry more weight than those of formal officials. This condition illustrates that power in Banten does not rest solely on modern bureaucratic structures but is also sustained by deeply rooted traditional networks. Thus, understanding the power relations between *jawara* and the government is essential to comprehending Banten's political character itself (Irfani et al., 2018). The identity of the *jawara* has also undergone an intriguing evolution. In the past, they were often associated with violence or banditry, but over time, this image has shifted toward a more positive one. Today, *jawara* are viewed as bandiyah moral figures who are respected not only for their physical strength but also for their charisma and their role in maintaining social balance. This transformation demonstrates the *jawara's* ability to adapt to changing times while preserving their traditional roots.

Banten's strong religious culture has also shaped the evolution of the *jawara*. Their close relationship with Islamic scholars (*ulama*) enhances their legitimacy, resulting in a unique socio-political alliance that combines religious authority with local cultural charisma. Consequently, discussions of power in Banten are incomplete without acknowledging the *jawara's* dual role in uniting tradition, religion, and politics into a complex, interwoven system (Saepudin & Kamaruddin, 2018). In contemporary politics, the *jawara* phenomenon extends beyond symbolic influence. They are not only figures who shape public opinion but also integral components of the governance structure itself. Some *jawara* have successfully entered formal political positions, while others maintain their status as informal community leaders with significant social influence. In both roles, *jawara* continue to play a pivotal part in shaping policy directions and maintaining regional political stability. How has the role of the *jawara* initially known as traditional figures rooted in martial arts and village communities transformed into political actors within Banten's regional government, in line with their shifting function from community protectors to participants in formal structures of power?

This study aims to thoroughly examine how the *jawara* figure emerges and operates within the political arena of Banten. Rather than conceptualizing *jawara* merely as cultural icons or traditional figures, this research seeks to uncover how they strategically negotiate their status within local political structures, as well as how power relations between *jawara* and government institutions are constructed, legitimized, and sustained. Through this analytical lens, the study intends to provide a comprehensive understanding of the transformation of *jawara* from charismatic community leaders rooted in local traditions to influential political actors capable of shaping regional governance and public policy. In essence, this study seeks to answer a

fundamental question: how do *jawara*, as local power figures, construct, maintain, and utilize political power within formal and informal political spheres in Banten?

Based on the objectives outlined above, this research offers both theoretical and practical contributions, as follows:

a. Theoretical Contribution

This study aims to contribute not only to the advancement of knowledge but also to the understanding of socio-political practices at the local level. Theoretically, it enriches scholarship on local politics in Indonesia by presenting a case analysis of Banten, where power is supported not only by state institutions but also by charismatic figures rooted in community traditions. By highlighting the role of *jawara* as representations of local strongmen, this study opens new conceptual space for discussing how non-formal actors can occupy and even shape regional political configurations.

b. Practical Contribution

Practically, the study provides deeper insights for regional governments, political parties, and civil society regarding the dynamics of power relations in Banten. Understanding the strategic position of *jawara* in local politics can assist policymakers in designing context-sensitive policies while anticipating potential conflicts arising from competing interests between traditional actors and formal structures. For academic communities, this research serves as an essential reference to understand how traditional power structures persist and evolve amidst political modernization. Thus, the study not only strengthens theoretical discourse but also contributes to developing socio-political strategies for regions exhibiting similar sociocultural characteristics to Banten.

2. Theoretical Framework

Power Relations Theory, Michael Foucault (1980)

Researchers employ Michel Foucault's (1980) Theory of Power Relations because it is highly relevant to the political dynamics and the enduring chain of power relations among *jawara* (local strongmen) in Banten. Foucault perceives power not as something possessed or concentrated in the hands of a particular group, but as something that exists, operates, and circulates throughout the entire network of social life. For Foucault, power does not merely take the form of vertical domination such as the government oppressing its citizens but manifests in every relationship between individuals, institutions, and everyday practices. Power operates subtly, diffusely, and often unconsciously among those who are involved within it. Within this framework, Foucault emphasizes that power is always intertwined with knowledge. He introduces the concept of power/knowledge, the idea that knowledge is never neutral but is always produced within power relations, and conversely, power always relies on the production of knowledge to sustain itself. For instance, medical, legal, or psychological knowledge does not simply describe reality; it also shapes how society understands the body, behavior, and normality. In other words, knowledge functions as a mechanism to regulate, control, and normalize human life.

According to Foucault, power relations do not operate solely in a repressive manner but also in a productive one. Power does not merely suppress or prohibit; it also constructs subjects, identities, and the possibilities of human action. Through institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons, or even moral and religious discourses, individuals are guided to behave according to certain norms. The discipline that emerges from these practices shapes both the body and the mind so that individuals "voluntarily" conform to established rules, even when coercion is not overtly present. Foucault illustrates that power functions productively rather than merely repressively. It not only forbids or punishes but also shapes ways of thinking, behaviors, and identities. He introduces the concept of disciplinary power a form of power that regulates the body

through rules, norms, and institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons, and the military. Foucault's theory of power relations demonstrates that.

3. Method

This researchers employs of a qualitative method using a single instrumental case study approach. This approach was chosen to gain an in depth understanding of the socio-political phenoman related to the role of jawara and the structure of power in Banten. According to Creswell (2014), a single instrumental case study is used when the researcher focuses on a specific issue or phenomenon and selects one primary case to provide a deeper understanding of that phenomenon.

The main phenomenon examined in this study concerns the enduring network patterns and the transformation of the *jawara's role* fb brom traditional figures rooted in local culture who synergize with local government to the emergence patron-client relationship pattern. The case analyzed focuses on the dynamics of the *jawara* in Banten, serving as a representative example for comprehensively understanding this phenomenon.

Data were collected through literature review, document analysis, academic works, historical data, news sources, and relevant prior studies. The data analysis followed Creswell's model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, interpretation, and thematic conclusion drawing. Data validiy was strengthened through source triangulation and critical literatur review. This approach enables the researcher to explore the social, cultural, and political contexts that shape the existence and legitimacy of the *jawara* within the regional power structure, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of power relations and local political dynamics in Banten.

4. Results and Discussion

Reproduction of Power Through Genealogy and Jawara Identity

The phenomenon of influential figures in Banten bearing the honorific title *Tubagus* reflects a distinctive pattern of power linked to the traditions of *jawara* (local champions), social hierarchy, and kinship networks within the region. This title is not merely a nominal identity but also a symbolic marker of inherited authority. Historically, it was used by the descendants of the Banten Sultanate's nobility (Hudaeri, 2003). In the contemporary context, the title continues to represent social status, local authority, and the transmission of legitimacy through lineage. This is exemplified by H. Tubagus Arif Hidayat, the General Chairperson of *Tjimande Tari Kolot Karuhun Banten Indonesia (TKKBI)*, whose *Tubagus* title signifies not only personal identity but also the interconnectedness of customary values, traditional leadership, and deep-rooted cultural-political networks within Banten society (Talens, 1993).

The presence of the *Tubagus* title among leaders of the TKKBI martial arts organization underscores a persistent pattern of cultural politics rooted in kinship-based patronage and strategies of legitimacy. For decades, Bantenese society has maintained the perception that individuals bearing the title *Tubagus* are more suitable to lead, as they are viewed as inheritors of local moral, cultural, and historical values (Suhaedi, 2006). Within the *jawara* community especially in traditional martial arts traditions figures serve not only as guardians of communal morality and security but also as holders of symbolic authority, endowed with social capital derived from historical and genealogical legacies. When such figures also claim descent from the Sultanate, their social legitimacy becomes further reinforced. This pattern demonstrates the enduring concept of power embedded in lineage, in which authority and prestige are not solely acquired through individual merit or social achievement but are also inherited as socio-political capital. Such power emerges

not from coercion but from the cultural narrative that structures public recognition of power through discourse (Muhammad, 2016).

The socio-political dynamics of Banten indicate that the existence of *jawara* figures can no longer be understood merely through the lens of physical prowess or martial tradition. Their role has evolved into an integral component of local power structures grounded in kinship, lineage, and traditional symbolism. In this context, *Tubagus*-titled figures embody the archetype of the local strongman non-formal actors who gain legitimacy not through state administrative office but through social authority, communal networks, and reputational capital embedded in cultural norms. Their presence represents a convergence of tradition and modernity, where cultural legitimacy is often perceived as more trustworthy than the authority of formal bureaucrats (Ato'ullah, 2014).

This reflects the enduring characteristic of local politics in Banten, which continues to privilege cultural trust over bureaucratic rationality. The use of the *Tubagus* title may thus be interpreted as both a mechanism of identity politics and a practice of local elite reproduction. Although the Sultanate system has long since dissolved, genealogical narratives and aristocratic symbols remain preserved as a means of sustaining social influence. This process illustrates a subtle pattern of power reproduction through cultural legitimacy, social authority, and political consolidation (Saepudin & Kamaruddin, 2018). Access to power in Banten, therefore, does not fully adhere to the principles of modern meritocracy; rather, it is shaped by symbolic and historical capital that privileges certain groups particularly those with noble lineage and esteemed social standing.

The leadership of figures such as H. Tb. Arif Hidayat in cultural and *jawara* based organizations demonstrates that authority is constructed not only through leadership capacity but also through historically embedded cultural legitimacy. This situation reinforces the notion that Banten's local strongmen derive legitimacy from cultural, genealogical, and social capital, often operating alongside or at times surpassing the formal structures of state authority. Consequently, local politics in Banten should be analyzed not merely through institutional perspectives but also through the cultural and historical relations that shape power configurations (Talens, 1993). Thus, examining the role of *jawara* remains crucial for understanding how informal power interacts with formal institutions in the dynamics of regional governance in Indonesia.

State Appartus Penetration With Organizational Governance

The organizational structure of *Tjimande Tari Kolot Karuhun Banten Indonesia*, in which nearly one-fourth of its members consist of public officials ranging from judges, legislators, lecturers, to politicians illustrates a problematic form of power relations between the martial arts organization and the state. What was once a cultural sphere rooted in tradition has now transformed into a political arena laden with interests. In Foucault's perspective, this condition demonstrates how power operates in its most subtle form not through overt domination, but through infiltration into social spaces that were previously considered autonomous (Pribadi, 2013). When cultural institutions become populated by state apparatuses, what occurs is no longer the preservation of values but the reproduction of power in a more concealed form.

The involvement of public officials in such organizational structures cannot be understood merely as a form of moral support or local pride. Rather, it signifies a process of co-optation, wherein state power absorbs traditional symbols to strengthen its legitimacy and social control. TTKKBI, which should have functioned as a vessel for the cultural expression of Banten's people, has instead turned into an extension of state authority a space where networks of patronage and political loyalty are disguised behind the façade of cultural identity (Sururi et al., 2020). In this context, the power relation that emerges is not symbiotic but subordinative, as the state embeds its influence while cloaking it under narratives of brotherhood and regional pride. With the presence of state officials within the organization's leadership, bureaucratic values

and adherence to formal structures have become part of the organization's internal "culture." Its members no longer think critically about power because power itself manifests in forms they revere teachers, officials, lecturers, or judges. Under such conditions, society loses the space to freely negotiate its traditions, as every cultural expression is now symbolically controlled by the state's representation within the organization (Pribadi, 2011).

This kind of power is hegemonic in nature, as it governs from within rather than from outside. Through such mechanisms, the state successfully blurs the boundary between public and cultural spaces, between what is formal and what is traditional. *Tjimande Tari Kolot Karuhun Banten Indonesia*, which once stood as part of the jawara heritage and local pride, has now become a veiled political channel that sustains loyalty to central authority. The officials involved bring with them their structural interests, tying the organization into broader networks of political and economic power, thereby gradually eroding its social function as a protector of the people (Sururi et al., 2020). Such an organizational structure produces an unequal power relation. Grassroots communities lose their bargaining position because the symbols of leadership within the organization have been absorbed by figures possessing political and economic authority. Power no longer flows from the bottom up; instead, it flows from the top regulating, supervising, and directing how "tradition" should be enacted (Suherman Arifin et al., 2023).

The traditional jawara values of courage and independence, once the essence of Banten's culture, have now shifted into mere rhetoric of justification, while in practice, they reflect dependency on formal authority. The power relation between *Tjimande Tari Kolot Karuhun Banten Indonesia* and the government, under such conditions, is not a healthy partnership but a disguised form of domination. It reveals how the state employs local symbols to maintain its hegemony, while the organization originally meant to embody the community's cultural expression has transformed into an instrument of political legitimation (Suherman Arifin et al., 2023). Within Foucault's framework, this demonstrates that power always finds a way to penetrate every sphere of life, even the most traditional ones, to the point where society no longer realizes that it is being monitored and guided by a system it has come to celebrate

Political Mobilization and Patron-Client Practices Based on Familial Networks

The transformation of the *jawara's* role in Banten's local politics reflects a distinctive social dynamic. Figures who were once regarded as protectors of the community have now become integral parts of both formal and informal power structures. Historically, *jawara* held an important position as guardians of security and moral order within rural society. The process of decentralization opened new opportunities for local figures to participate in governance. This condition allowed *jawara* to evolve from traditional leaders into intermediaries between political elites and the people (Muhammad, 2016). Public trust in charismatic figures such as the *jawara* emerged due to the weakness of formal institutions during the New Order era. This role continued to develop in the modern political system through the use of social networks, cultural capital, and deeply rooted moral influence. Such trust has become an essential political asset for *jawara* to gain electoral legitimacy and expand their influence within the realm of power (Effendi, 2018).

The pattern of power in Banten strongly reflects the practice of familial politics. This phenomenon demonstrates how the social networks of *jawara* are often closely intertwined with the family networks of political elites. The family of Ratu Atut Chosiyah serves as a prominent example of power domination at the regional level. Michel Foucault's (1980) concept of power explains that power does not solely reside in the hands of rulers but is dispersed across various social relations. Power is fluid, mobile, and operates through interconnected networks of influence. This pattern is evident in the relationship between *jawara* and political elites, who mutually exploit social legitimacy and cultural influence for their respective interests.

The martial arts organization *Tjimande Tari Kolot Kebon Djeruk Hilir* (TTKKDH) provides strong evidence of the integration between culture and politics in Banten. During the 2017 gubernatorial election, this network actively supported the victory of the Wahidin Halim and Andika Hazrumy pair. TTKKDH mobilized traditional values and cultural symbols to foster political solidarity among the populace. This phenomenon illustrates the workings of symbolic power rather than direct coercion, aligning with Foucault's concept of productive power. The *jawara* exert control over society through symbols of honor and respect, rather than through violence. People follow their influence out of belief in their authority, moral integrity, and social role (Arifin et al., 2023).

The power possessed by *jawara* is not limited to political domination; it also shapes the way people think. Foucault's concept of disciplinary power explains mechanisms of social surveillance that lead individuals to comply without direct coercion. This condition occurs in Banten when citizens adjust their political behavior according to the moral and cultural influence constructed by *jawara*. Such obedience arises from symbolic awareness rather than physical pressure. This form of power creates social stability that appears harmonious but conceals long-term structural inequality (Dr. Amalia Syauket, S.H., 2021).

Dependence on the protection and support of *jawara* reduces citizens' political autonomy. This situation represents a form of invisible structural violence, as inequality is normalized within the local culture. The involvement of *jawara* in dynastic political networks also poses a dilemma for democracy. Their presence strengthens local legitimacy yet simultaneously restricts political regeneration and limits opportunities for new actors to emerge (Setiawan & Sa'diyah, 2021). The dominance of *jawara* within local governance has clear implications for administrative practices. Their participation contributes to social stability due to their proximity to the community, but such stability often relies on personal loyalty rather than institutional strength. In the context of development, *jawara* and political family networks influence the distribution of public resources. Groups with close ties to these networks often receive preferential treatment in accessing aid, projects, and bureaucratic positions. These practices undermine the principles of transparent and equitable governance. Local governments must understand cultural contexts without sacrificing meritocracy and accountability (Amiruddin et al., 2019).

The *jawara's* role in Banten's politics also reveals the strength of identity politics. They serve as symbols uniting religious, cultural, and communal values of bravery inherent in Bantenese society. From Foucault's perspective, *jawara* power is formed through networks of discourse and symbols rather than mere physical force. *Jawara* exemplify that power can be held by cultural actors capable of shaping public consciousness. The interaction among ulama (religious scholars), *jawara*, and bureaucrats creates a unique power ecosystem where tradition and modernity coexist. This ecosystem must be carefully maintained to prevent it from evolving into an oligarchic structure that restricts public participation (Hudaeri, 2003).

The discussion of the *jawara's* role within the sphere of power highlights the complexity of Banten's political landscape. These figures have successfully adapted to changing times without losing their traditional roots. Their influence aligns with Foucault's notion that power is productive and capable of shaping social consciousness. This structure perpetuates subtle yet persistent inequalities. The central challenge for local democracy in Banten lies in balancing traditional values with modern principles, so that cultural forces like the *jawara* serve as moral pillars of society rather than instruments for sustaining political domination (Muslim et al., 2015).

Governmental Resource Allocation and Institutional Support

The phenomenon in which the government routinely allocates funds whether in the form of meeting refreshments, event support, or the provision of facilities and infrastructure for TTKKBI through agencies such as the National and Political Unity Agency (*Kesbangpol*) or the Department of Tourism, illustrates a

subtle yet effective form of power relations. From a Foucauldian perspective, this relationship is not merely an administrative aid but a mechanism of power that operates through the distribution and regulation of resources (Sururi et al., 2020). Such assistance becomes an instrument for normalizing a subordinative relationship between the state and the organization, where financial support is framed as a gesture of “care” from the government but in reality creates structural dependency.

The Secretary General of TTKKBI, Mr. Dody Suryana, stated in a field interview, “We are grateful because the government always pays attention. Sometimes, for large events, we receive assistance such as snacks or training instruments like drums. Basically, the government often helps us.” In this position, TTKKBI is no longer fully autonomous. When the organization’s activities and infrastructure frequently depend on government funding, its scope of action is gradually governed by bureaucratic logic and the political interests that underlie it. The state does not need to explicitly command or control the organization; simply by regulating the flow of funds, it can shape the organization’s behavior and policy direction.

As Foucault argues, modern power operates not through prohibition but through the production of truth in this case, the “truth” that an organization will “develop” only when aligned with government policy (Triantono, 2019). When financial support is provided routinely, power operates through gratitude and loyalty. The relationship between the government and TTKKBI is no longer equal but resembles a patron-client relationship: the government acts as the provider of resources, while the organization becomes the recipient expected to demonstrate loyalty (Adon & Avi, 2023). Within such a structure, power relations unfold in a subtle yet profound form. The government successfully dominates not only the organization’s activities but also its self-perception, leading it to see itself as a “partner of the government” rather than an independent cultural entity.

This financial relationship also affects how the organization manages its cultural symbols and discourse. The assistance distributed through *Kesbangpol* or the Department of Tourism signifies that TTKKBI is treated more as a cultural asset for regional promotion than as a social space born from grassroots initiatives. This shift alters the internal orientation of the organization from one grounded in the preservation of local values to one functioning as an instrument of state legitimacy and image-building. Power becomes invisible because it operates under narratives of “synergy” and “empowerment,” while behind these narratives lies a process of disciplining the organization to remain within the orbit of power (Thabrani, 2022). Within a Foucauldian logic, such aid represents a form of governmentality a mode of governance that manages behavior through subtle regulation. The state no longer exerts control through coercion but by creating dependencies that lead organizations to voluntarily conform (Suherman Arifin et al., 2023).

Seemingly trivial forms of assistance, such as snacks for events or training equipment, become symbols of hidden power; they signify the state’s success in pacifying cultural resistance through gestures that appear “benevolent” and “participatory.” type of power relation renders TTKKBI no longer a critical or autonomous actor but part of a network of power that sustains the status quo. The financial support provided by *Kesbangpol* and the Department of Tourism is not merely an administrative gesture but a concrete representation of how the state exercises control through deliberate benevolence. This is the face of power that does not oppress overtly but subdues softly through comfort, dependency, and gratitude. Consequently, TTKKBI becomes part of a larger system in which power operates without coercion yet produces near-total compliance (Pribadi, 2011).

Institutionalization of Power Through State Actor in Advisory Role

Jawara figures’ involvement in power structures is no longer a marginal occurrence. It has become a mainstream feature that demonstrates how power operates not only through formal channels of governance but also through symbolic, cultural, and social networks deeply rooted in society. One concrete

manifestation of this phenomenon can be observed in the martial arts organization *Tjimande Tari Kolot Karuhun Hilir Banten Indonesia* (TTKKBI), whose board of advisors includes prominent national figures such as General Listyo Sigit Prabowo, several members of the Indonesian House of Representatives, and other influential personalities. This fact is not merely a sign of symbolic proximity between the state and traditional communities, but a tangible manifestation of the power relations described by Michel Foucault power that is not vertical but dispersed and operating through complex social networks (Septiwiharti, 2020).

In Foucault's view, power cannot be understood as something possessed by individuals or institutions. Power is not held; it operates. It exists within every social interaction, flowing among institutions, symbols, and everyday practices. Applied to the case of TTKKBI, power relations are not only visible in the formal positions of state officials within the advisory board but also in how those positions shape and normalize the relationship between the state and the people of Banten through the cultural symbol of the *jawara* (Adon & Avi, 2023). By placing state figures within the structure of a martial arts organization, power operates subtly, creating reciprocal legitimacy between a state seeking to embrace local identity and a traditional community seeking recognition from the center of authority.

This relationship can be understood as a form of disciplinary power as explained by Foucault. In such a mechanism, the state does not need to subdue society through violence or overt domination. Instead, it builds discipline through institutions, norms, and representations that are voluntarily accepted. TTKKBI becomes a space where this discipline operates symbolically. The organization not only practices martial arts but also produces meanings of identity, honor, and authority. When such institutions gain legitimacy from state officials, traditional cultural practices transform into a legitimate arena of power (Salim & Andani, 2020a). Here, local knowledge embodied in *jawara* values such as courage, loyalty, and solidarity is converted into political knowledge that reinforces the structure of formal authority.

The power relation formed between the *jawara* and the state cannot be seen as a one-sided relationship. It is a form of power/knowledge that is mutually beneficial. The state gains cultural legitimacy from the *jawara* symbol, which is seen as authentic and deeply rooted in society, while the martial arts organization gains political legitimacy and structural protection from its proximity to the political elite. In Foucault's terms, this is the productive nature of power it does not merely repress but creates new realities in which tradition and power blend into mutually reinforcing forms (Thabrani, 2022). This relationship shows that power does not stop at bureaucratic spaces but spreads throughout the fabric of social life through symbols, practices, and organizations that appear "non-political" but are laden with political significance.

Presence of figures such as Listyo Sigit Prabowo as part of TTKKBI's advisory board underscores the state's effort to produce a "narrative of order" in Banten through cultural channels. Within Foucault's framework, this represents a form of surveillance that is not coercive but operates through the internalization of values and symbolic proximity. The *jawara* and organizational members feel bound by moral and symbolic ties to the state not because of command, but because of a sense of belonging to a structure now perceived as one with the government (Thabrani, 2022). Here, Foucault's concept of the panopticon finds its relevance, as surveillance no longer requires an actual watcher; individuals internalize the awareness that they are part of a system that must be maintained.

This relationship forms a subtler kind of power one that operates through loyalty, respect, and cultural symbolism. Such a power relation also carries an inherent ambiguity. On one hand, it strengthens the integration between the state and society through local cultural media. On the other hand, it risks blurring the boundary between traditional and state power, thereby narrowing the space for community autonomy. When *jawara* figures become part of formal power structures, the values of resistance once inherent to

them gradually erode. The *jawara* no longer stand as autonomous protectors of the people but become components of the very power mechanisms they once resisted (Salim & Andani, 2020b). In Foucault's framework, this demonstrates how power absorbs potential opposition into itself neutralizing resistance through processes of normalization and representation.

The power relationship between the *jawara* and the government in this context can no longer be separated from the construction of discourse. The state uses the *jawara* symbol to project an image of closeness to the people, while the *jawara* use that proximity to reaffirm their relevance in the modern era. What occurs, therefore, is not merely a political relationship but an exchange of interests in which the state produces a narrative of order, while the *jawara* produce a narrative of authenticity (Thabrani, 2022). These narratives intersect and reinforce each other, creating a political reality in which tradition and power merge without clear boundaries. Through Foucault's theoretical lens, the involvement of high-ranking officials in organizations like TTKKBI is not an anomaly but part of a productive mechanism of power. It reveals how power operates at the micro level within cultural symbols and social relations shaping public perceptions of who is entitled to rule and how that power is exercised. In this context, the *jawara* are no longer merely protectors or local political actors but strategic nodes within the network of power connecting society, culture, and the state (Septiwiharti, 2020).

The power relation between the *jawara* and the government in Banten reflects a form of power that is flexible yet deeply entrenched power that no longer operates through coercion but through representation, legitimacy, and recognition. TTKKBI stands as a concrete example of how modern power in Indonesia is constructed not only through formal institutions but also through traditional symbols absorbed and normalized by the state (Adon & Avi, 2023). From this, it becomes clear that the stage of power in Banten does not belong solely to officials or bureaucrats but also to those who can negotiate tradition as part of a strategy of power. In all of this, the *jawara* stand not at the margins of history but at the very center of the orbit of power, reaffirming that in Banten's politics, tradition is not a shadow of the past but an instrument for governing the present.

5. Conclusion

The *jawara* phenomenon in Banten demonstrates how local political power is constructed through the intersection of cultural traditions, kinship networks, historical narratives, and informal authority structures rather than through formal institutions alone. The transformation of the *jawara* from cultural protectors into influential political actors reflects their ability to mobilize symbolic legitimacy, genealogical ties to the Banten Sultanate, and close relationships with religious elites, enabling them to negotiate power within modern bureaucratic and democratic settings. Power in Banten thus operates in a diffuse and productive manner, as conceptualized by Michel Foucault, through cultural hegemony, patronage, and governmentality that position the *jawara* simultaneously as political intermediaries and agents of social control. While this configuration contributes to social stability and grassroots legitimacy, it also risks constraining democratization by reinforcing patronage practices, limiting merit-based competition, and consolidating a form of cultural oligarchy. Future research is encouraged to undertake comparative studies across other regions, examine generational changes among *jawara* in response to political modernization and digital participation, and explore the perspectives of civil society actors to assess how cultural authority can be reconciled with more inclusive, transparent, and accountable local governance.

6. Reference

Adon, M., & Avi, G. (2023). Konsep Religiositas Masyarakat Suku Cepang Manggarai-NTT dalam Simbolisme Ritus Da'de. *Dialog*. <https://doi.org/10.47655/dialog.v46i1.680>

- Ahmad, I. (2018). Kiai dan jawara dalam politik lokal: Studi kasus Pilgub Banten 2017. *Jurnal Politik*, 4(2), 267–296.
- Amiruddin, S., Irfani, F., Sultan, U., Tirtayasa, A., Ibn, U., & Bogor, K. (2019). Jawa Banten the Social Transformation of Local Elites Muslim in Indonesia Suwaib. *Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales*, 1–27.
- Arifin, S., Laksana, A., Irwanto, & Arsaid Ikrom, M. (2023). Identitas Jawa Banten Tak Lekang Dimakan Zaman di Era Globalisasi dan Modernisasi (Studi Kasus Jawa di Desa Terumbu , Kec . Kasemen. 05(03), 1–14.
- Athoullah. (2014). JAWARA DALAM PERUBAHAN SOSIAL DI MASYARAKAT BANTEN. 13, 24–38. <https://doi.org/10.21009/jimd.v13i2.6413>
- Bandiyah, B. (2018). Evolusi jawara di Banten (Studi evolusi dari bandit menjadi pejabat). *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik*, 1(1), 60–68. Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Pendekatan, Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan Mixed*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka pelajar.
- Dr. Amalia Syauket, S.H., M. S. (2021). OCTOPUSSY Sinergi Penguasa dan Pengusaha Tipologi Gurita Korupsi di Banten.
- Effendi, R. W. (2018). DINASTI POLITIK DALAM PEMERINTAHAN LOKAL STUDI KASUS DINASTI KOTA BANTEN. 2(2), 1–15.
- Foucault, Michel. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Hidayat, R., & Sujana, I. (2019). Identitas budaya jawara dan revitalisasi peran lokal di Banten. *Humaniora*, 31(3), 212–223.
- Hudaeri, M. (2003). JAWARA DI BANTEN : PERAN, KEDUDUKAN DAN JARINGANNYA. 20(97), 1–36.
- Irfani, F., Nafiudin, I., & Jamaluddin, W. (2018). Political Jawa of Local Moslem Elits Among Banten Oligarchy In Indonesia After The New Order Era. 1. <https://doi.org/10.24042/JW.V1i1.3770>
- Muhammad, E. S. (2016). TUMBUHNYA OLIGARKI LOKAL : KEKUASAAN EKONOMI dan POLITIK TUBAGUS CHAERI.
- Muslim, A., Kolopaking, L. M., Dharmawan, A. H., & Soetarto, E. (2013). Dinamika peran sosial politik ulama dan jawara di Pandeglang, Banten. *MIMBAR: Jurnal Sosial dan Pembangunan*, 29(1), 29–38.
- Pribadi, Y. (2013). Another side of Islam in Banten: The socio-political roles of jawara during the New Order era, 1966–1998. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 7(1), 95–126.
- Saepudin, & Kamaruddin. (2018). Jawa and Local Election (Case Study of The Jawa Role of Tjimande Tari kolot Kebon Djeruk Hilir to win Wahidin Halim-Andika Hazrumy in the 2017 Banten gubernatorial election). <https://doi.org/10.2991/ICOSOP-17.2018.19>
- Salim, A., & Andani, A. (2020a). Kerukunan Umat Beragama; Relasi Kuasa Tokoh Agama dengan Masyarakat dalam Internalisasi Sikap Toleransi di Bantul, Yogyakarta. Arfannur. <https://doi.org/10.24260/arfannur.v1i1.139>
- Septiwiharti, D. (2020). BUDAYA SINTUVU MASYARAKAT KAILI DI SULAWESI TENGAH [THE SINTUVU CULTURE OF THE KAILI PEOPLE IN CENTRAL SULAWESI]. 14, 47–64. <https://doi.org/10.24832/nw.v14i1.419>
- Setiawan, H., & Sa'diyah, K. (2021). ARTICLE Secretariat General Ministry of Home Affairs Republic of Indonesia Women and Kinship Politics in the 2020 Regional Head Elections in Central Java. *Governmental Studies*, 119(130), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.53013/bestuurskunde.1.1.119>
- Suhaedi, H. . (2006). KEKUASAAN, KEKERASAN DAN MOBILITAS JAWARA. 23(2), 287–309.
- Talens, J. (1993). Ritual Power : The Instalation of a King in Banten ., 149, 333–355.

Thabrani, A. (2022). KONFLIK KEPENTINGAN: KONSTRUKSI MEDIA MASSA PADA KASUS KATIDAKADILAN GENDER (ANALISIS TEORI RELASI KEKUASAAN DAN PENGETAHUAN "POWER AND KNOWLEDGE" DARI MICHEL FOUCAULT). *Jurnal Kolaborasi Resolusi Konflik*. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jkrk.v4i2.40041>