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# *Contesting State Forests in Post-Suharto Indonesia: Authority Formation, State Forest Land Dispute, and Power in Upland Central Java, Indonesia*

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*This article explores the ongoing conflict over state forest land between the local population and the* State Forestry Corporation *(SFC) in a village in upland Central Java with regard to authority formation. It looks at how different agents draw on different sources of authority in the course of the conflict and its negotiations. The principal questions are to what kind of sources of authority villagers refer to and how the formation of authority informs the relations between the state and society in the land dispute. The article is based on 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork and focuses on the central figure of Pak Wahid who took a leading position in the forest land dispute and in mobilising peasants in the village. The article argues that in post-Suharto Java, leadership in the struggle for state forest land at the village level is embedded in the interaction of Javanese ideas of power and authority as well as administrative authority. Due to political and institutional reforms, new sources of authority could be invoked while there are no real changes in the power relations within the village or between the SFC and the villagers.*

***Keywords:*** *Authority Formation; Land Dispute; Power Relations; State Forest Land; Upland Java*

*Dieser Artikel untersucht den anhaltenden Konflikt um staatliche Waldflächen zwischen der lokalen Bevölkerung und der* State Forestry Corporation *(SFC) in einem Dorf im Hochland von Zentral-Java in Bezug auf die Entwicklung von Autorität. Es wird untersucht, wie sich unterschiedliche AkteurInnen im Rahmen des Konflikts und dessen Verhandlung auf unterschiedliche Bezugsquellen von Autorität beziehen. Die zentralen Forschungsfragen in diesem Zusammenhang sind, auf welche Bezugsquellen von Autorität sich DorfbewohnerInnen beziehen und wie die Entwicklung von Autorität die Beziehungen zwischen Staat und Gesellschaft im Rahmen des Landkonflikts beeinflusst. Der Artikel basiert auf einer 11-monatigen ethnografischen Feldforschung und fokussiert auf die Person von Pak Wahid, der eine Schlüsselrolle im Konflikt um die staatlichen Waldflächen und in der Mobilisierung von Bauern und Bäuerinnen einnahm. Der Artikel argumentiert, dass Führung im Kampf um staatliche Waldflächen in post-Suharto Java in einem Zusammenspiel zwischen einer javanischen Vorstellung von Macht und Autorität und administrativer Autorität eingebettet ist. Aufgrund von politischen und institutionellen Reformen konnten neue Bezugsquellen von Autorität aktiviert werden, während keine wirklichen Veränderungen in den Machtverhältnissen innerhalb des Dorfes sowie zwischen SFC und den DorfbewohnerInnen zustande kommen.*

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***Schlagworte:*** *Entwicklung von Autorität; Java's Hochland; Landkonflikt; Machtverhältnisse; staatliche Waldflächen*

## *Introduction*

This article discusses emerging authorities in dispute negotiations between local populations and the *State Forestry Corporation* (SFC) and other parties in Wonosobo district in Central Java. Conflicts over state forest land became visible after the fall of President Suharto in 1998, when the Indonesian authoritarian state (known as New Order) seemed to lose its hegemonic position and many local communities occupied land areas designated as state forest land.

When discussing authority, many anthropologists draw on Weber's division of authority systems into three different types: rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic, all of which contribute to processes of change in the world. In Weberian philosophy, the rational-legal form of authority was only possible in the West, while charismatic authority challenged rational and traditional forms (Weber, 1968, pp. 217-219). Many anthropologists (Anderson, 1990; Antlöv, 1995; Geertz, 1980) have used this theoretical line of thought to discuss different forms of authority in Indonesia. Geertz (1980, pp. 124-126), for example, proposed a theory of the ceremonial theatre state and exemplary centre in South-East Asia. Accordingly, power is attractive rather than coercive since the leader manifests his power through ceremonies, thereby becoming an exemplary centre, something which only a powerful leader with certain qualities can achieve. Anderson (1990) has made similar suggestions using the example of a king who embodies and exemplifies spiritual power through his behaviour (see also Siegel, 1986).

Both these models have been applied when studying Javanese village leadership. In exploring leadership in Javanese New Order villages, Keeler (1985), for instance, has suggested that Javanese villagers "want very much to see in their headmen powerful leaders" (p. 114) in the sense of being 'spiritually potent' and thus a paternal figure to the villagers. In Keeler's view, the villagers' need for a powerful leader stems from a lack of strong formal (political) organisation (1985, p. 139), though he notes that villagers often resist a concentration of power by dividing their loyalties, which causes local tensions. The question then arises as to the required qualities of a "powerful

figure" in the Javanese context. Antlöv (1995), examining similar themes, suggests two bases of authority in New Order Java: community and administration. He argues that the Javanese rural elite comprises "privileged clients" of the state (*anak mas* – favourite children) whose opportunities to accumulate power and rule depend on their crucial links with higher authorities (pp. 6-7). Because of the need for these upper links the village headmen are stretched between the villagers and higher administrative forces. Antlöv concludes that the New Order state reached all corners of a Sundanese village (West Java) and any other source of authority could not be utilised at that level. Furthermore, he suggested that there was no possibility for upward mobility without total submission to the New Order regime.

In the context of state formation in South-East Asia, Day (2001, p. 166), however, suggested that a clear demarcation between Western "rational" and indigenous "ceremonial states" is difficult to detect. Rather, "rational" bureaucratic organisation and the ritual state have become intertwined, forming a hybrid form of authority. Following this line of thought, I suggest that ideally we can distinguish two forms of power when we look at the formation of authority in Javanese villages: the Javanese idea of power (Anderson, 1990) and Western rational-legal knowledge or discipline (Foucault, 1977). Though the administration became an increasingly important source of authority during the New Order, community-based authority (the Javanese idea of power) informs state formation (administration) and vice versa at the village level, and in the post-New Order Javanese village new sources could be invoked showing the hybrid nature of the authority formation process.

Following Day (2001, p. 34), I propose in this paper that the state as well as its subjects should be seen as agents with multiple resources and techniques within the context of given situations. In the authority building process, for example, agents draw from different sources (religion, myths, bureaucracy and legislation, extra-state sources), thereby demonstrating the contested and hybrid nature of authority. My article will contribute to the discussion of power and authority with regard to land disputes in Java. I argue that in post-Suharto Indonesia rural leaders draw from different sources of culturally informed authority in processes that demonstrate that they are active agents in these disputes. Thus, my principal research question is: From what sources of authority do villagers draw and how does authority building inform this forest land dispute and the relations between the state and society?

I conducted 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork between 2003 and 2004 in the forest village that I call Wanasana[2] in Wonosobo district, with a specific focus on power relations between the actors in a dispute about rights of access to and control over actual state forest land and forests around the villages which were located close to state forest land. After 1999, the villagers of Wanasana, together with some NGOs, had taken the lead in demonstrating against the SFC – locally known as *Perum Perhutani* – in the district capital, taking over state forest land and planting crops and trees there. They claimed that they had rights as Indonesian citizens to benefit from state forest land and that they could manage it better than the SFC and thus protect the environment in Wonosobo. The discussion focuses on the case of Pak Wahid who took a leading position in the forest land dispute negotiations examined in this article. His case exemplifies the hybrid nature of authority formation and how some authority sources are more suitable than others in the Javanese village arena. As a former village head he contested the village head elections during my stay and was exposed in the media as the leader of the local peasants in their effort to take over the state forest land in Wonosobo. I argue that his active role in the dispute was partly due to his struggle with 'Javanese' values in his quest for power, values embedded in the village bureaucracy to which he had belonged but from which he had had to withdraw for various reasons.

## *Land Dispute in Wonosobo District, Central Java*

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Kaliwiro sub-district – where Wanasana village is located – had become known as the worst area of forest destruction in Wonosobo. Many Wanasana villagers (and most probably some villagers from nearby) were co-operating in an organised manner with outsiders, SFC staff, and the police in the devastating felling of trees from the slopes around the village resulting in the loss of at least 10 percent of the forest cover in Wonosobo district (Adi et al., 2004, pp.12-13; Lounela, 2009).[3]

2 The village names and names of the villagers mentioned in this article are pseudonyms.

3 The island of Java is divided into five provinces: West Java, East Java, Central Java, Banten, and Capital Territory of Jakarta with approximately 120 million inhabitants. Central Java, where Wonosobo district is located, is inhabited by 32.64 million people (2011) and covers 3.25 million hectares. There are 236 villages (*desa*), 154 of which are categorised as forest villages, and 29 village level administrative units that are part of the city or regency government (*kelurahan*) in Wonosobo. Wonosobo district is inhabited by about 758,078 people (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Wonosobo, 2012) while the village of this study is inhabited by 5,010 people.

Wonosobo district is located north west of Yogyakarta, in the heart of Central Java, covering 98,468 hectares, 19,965 hectares of which are state forest land[4] and 19,472 hectares peoples' forest (*hutan rakyat*) (Adi et al., 2004, p. 15; Nomura, 2008, p. 172). The state forest (about 19 percent of the total land area) is managed by the SFC with two different units operating in Wonosobo: The Southern Kedu Unit (9,728 hectares) is mainly planted with pine trees, damar (*Agathis alba*), and teak, while the Northern Kedu Unit (9,967 hectares) is mostly planted with pine trees and mahogany (*Switienia macrophylla*) (Adi et al., 2004, p. 22). In 2000, forest cover in Wonosobo comprised about 38,368 hectares, including both state forest and peoples' forest.

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, large jungles had covered the Sindoro and Sumbing mountains when the area began to suffer from erosion because of uncontrolled tree felling (Boomgaard, 1996, pp. 20-21; Lounela, 2009, p. 66; Smiet, 1990, p. 289). In response, the Dutch colonial government started reforestation programmes on the slopes which accelerated in the 1880s. By the mid-nineteenth century, the government had made new regulations requiring villagers to get a license to cut teak for which they had to pay a fee to the officials, and in 1875, a penal and police regulation on forestry matters was enacted (Boomgaard, 1996, p. 21; Lounela, 2009, p. 68). The roots of the dispute can therefore be traced back to the Dutch colonial period, when foresters entered Wanasana village to mark out areas designated as state forest land with wooden stakes, thereby limiting the access of local populations to those areas (Lounela, 2009). In 1945, *Jawatan Kehutanan* (the Indonesian Forest Service) was founded, replacing the colonial SFC. In 1961, it was transformed into the *General Head Body* SFC (BPU *Perhutani – Badan Pimpinan Umum Perhutani*) and in 1972, into the *General State Forestry Corporation* (*Perum Perhutani*) which, by 1978, had three main units: Unit I East Java (1961), Unit II Central Java (1961), and Unit III West Java (1978) (Departamen Kehutanan, 1986, p. 76; Peluso, 1992, p. 126). In the 1960s, Wanasana villagers related to me, they were told to cut the trees in their area and in the 1970s, pine trees (*pinus merkurii*) were planted 'everywhere'. The villagers disliked pine trees, as they claimed that they caused water scarcity – which means that villagers' rice fields had to be transformed into forest gardens –, and that pine needles made soil 'hard' (*keras*), killing other vegetation. However, the SFC maintained that

4 These figures draw on data from the SFC, while the district government claims the state forest land to be 17,746 hectares.

pine trees were its main source of income and thus necessary for the corporation. SFC cooperated with the village functionaries to maintain 'order' and restrict access of the villagers to state forest land. Thus hidden tensions resulting in small-scale conflicts over forest access, have continually occurred over a long period of time, demonstrating the ongoing nature of the dispute (Lounela, 2009).

The parties to the Wonosobo land dispute were principally the forest village peasants and the SFC. The SFC is administratively divided into district, provincial, and central levels, but it does not follow state administrative boundaries and has its own administrative system. The organisation includes the Management Unit (Central Office and Director), the Forest Management District Unit (KPH – 20 units in Central Java), led by an *administrateur* or ADM, the Forest Management Sub-District Unit (BKPH, 7 units in the Kedu Selatan Forest District Unit), led by a supervisor (*asper*), which includes the Ngadisono Forest Sub-District Unit, and, finally, the Forest Police Unit led by a forester head or *mantri*. In Wonosobo district, state forest management is divided between the KPH Kedu Selatan and KPH Kedu Utara Units. During my fieldwork, the leading role in the negotiations at the district level was filled by the ADM at the KPH Kedu Selatan Unit (Purworejo), while at the village level the *asper* and *mantri* played a big part in negotiating with the villagers. However, the Central Unit and Director, located close to the Ministry of Forestry in Jakarta, had superior authority over other units. The other parties to the dispute were NGOs, state officials at the central (Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Forestry), district, and sub-district levels, police, and some academics. Different levels of government assumed different roles, demonstrating that the state in Indonesia is not monolithic. For instance, at one stage the district government, led by the district head (*bupati*), was heavily promoting state forest management by the local communities through regional regulations on community-based forest management, but the central government (Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Forestry) eventually put a stop to these efforts after extensive lobbying from the SFC, which rejected the district government and *bupati* policies (Adi et al., 2004, p. 29).

The dispute was quite extraordinary in the Javanese context: For decades, the SFC control over state forest land had been almost total, exercised through the smallest *Resort Polisi Hutan* (RPH – Forest Police Unit) that patrolled the forestry sub-district, comprising a *mantri* and a team of four *mandor*s. The units could summarily arrest

people and take them to the state police for further processing and, indeed, many Wanasana villagers recounted experiences of *mandor*s chasing them if they took branches or wood from the state forest area during the New Order period (Lounela, 2009; see also Peluso, 1992). When President Suharto and the New Order regime fell in 1998, many forest peasants participated in taking over these state forest lands claiming they could better manage and protect the forest than the SFC. According to them, the local gardens were fertile and green with multiple tree species, fruits, and crops which provided both cash and subsistence harvests, and this should serve as an exemplar for state forest management. Between 1999 and 2001, in a multi-stakeholder forum, some NGOs and the district government drafted a Regional Regulation on community-based forest management (Perda PSDHBM 22/2001). However, the district head at that time, Trimawan Nugrohadi, faced difficulties in furthering the implementation of the regulation because the central government started to oppose it. At the same time, the head of the *District Assembly Commission*, B. C. Krustanto, and the vice-district head, H. Abdul Kholiq Arif (from here on Pak Kholiq), were vocal in their support of the regulation. Disappointed with it, the SFC withdrew from the negotiation forum (rejoining it at a later point) and claimed that the Perda PSDHBM was countermanding a superior national law (UU 41/1999), which established the SFC as power holder over state forest lands in Java. In 2002, the Ministry of Home Affairs asked for cancellation of the regulation, which caused new tensions that continued during my stay between 2003 and 2004 and afterwards.

The fieldwork for this article was inevitably multi-sited because of the many arenas wherein the control over state forest land was disputed. Here, however, I focus on the village arena as represented by Wanasana, a village of about 5,010 inhabitants in 2002. Wanasana spreads along the main asphalted road that runs from Prembun to the city of Wonosobo. Above the village, the hills marked out as state forest land had been planted with pine trees, which were all cut down between 1998 and 2003 by 'illegal loggers' with the naked sandy slopes then being planted with maize, chili, cassava, banana trees, and later *sengon* (albizzia, *Paraserianthes falcataria*) by the villagers. Beyond the boundaries of the state forest area spreads land owned by the villagers, a landscape of green and abundant forest gardens, where the villagers plant bananas, coconuts, and various other trees and crops. The peoples' forest, planted with various tree species, has been considered an example of sustainable and eco-

logically sound forest management. The land area disputed (72.5 hectares during my stay) is located in the mountains, which were territorially demarked as the Southern Kedu Unit by the SFC. It is administratively part of the Ngadisono Sub-District Forestry Unit that covers 6,491 hectares and spreads across seven villages which are categorised as forest villages as they are located in close proximity to state forest land. In this article, I wish to explore how authority building informs this forest land dispute and its settlement efforts, particularly in Wanasana, one of the seven forest villages that had a visible role in the protests and negotiations through the actions of the active peasant leader Pak Wahid.

## *Building Authority in the Village Through the Forest Land Dispute*

Authority building in the village by Pak Wahid, a man in his 40s, became related to the land dispute after 1999. Pak Wahid took a lead in mobilising peasants in the seven villages bordering on the Ngadisono Forestry Sub-District (the SFC forest management unit) to take over state forest land and negotiate access to it. He told me that, in 2000, he had become extremely depressed when he saw the destruction of a pine tree plantation that had surrounded and shielded the local 'power place', considered to be the 'centre of the world' by its local guardian and many of the villagers. Pak Wahid decided that something should be done both to reforest the land and provide work for those who had lost their income when they were no longer needed to manage the plantations.

Due to the land scarcity and unequal land distribution in Wanasana (as in Java and Wonosobo in general), there were 80 villagers who did not own land at all (*numpang*) and land ownership averaged out at only 0.37 hectare. In 2002, about 40 families owned more than one hectare of land each. Following the inheritance system, each child in the family got a plot of the same size for a garden, housing, or a rice field and as a consequence, land ownership has become extremely scattered. Thus, many families were in need of agricultural land and were eager to have access rights to state land for this purpose (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Wonosobo, 2002; Lounela, 2009, p. 112). Frustrated and distressed by forest destruction, Pak Wahid described how he called on the heads of the seven villages in the Ngadisono Forestry Sub-District to take part in an

agreement he intended to make with the staff of the Kedu Selatan Unit of the SFC. In 2000, the seven village heads, under Pak Wahid's leadership, demanded that the SFC grow only teak trees in the blocks (*petak* in the language of the SFC) of the Ngadisono Forestry Sub-District Unit, with the provisos that peasants should be able to get a share of harvests, and they should be able to plant some crops under the teak trees. In spring 2001, some forest village peasants (led by Pak Wahid) agreed with the SFC to replace pine trees with teak trees in the Ngadisono Forestry Sub-District Unit. The parties had agreed that Block 11C (72.5 hectares) would be planted with teak and that other blocks would be 40 percent teak and 60 percent pine (in SFC language called *vourbou* blocks, altogether 115.2 hectares). While SFC decided to withdraw from the Wonosobo multi-stakeholder forum negotiations, it allowed villagers to plant crops and some tree species on the state forest land, and negotiated directly with them.

In March 2003, soon after my arrival in the village, I witnessed the last land distribution concerning Block 11C above the village in the hills, an event organised by Pak Wahid. Other land distribution events had been organised before my arrival. The villagers now had temporary access to state forest land and they were able to have some say in what to plant and harvest there. On a sunny day, Pak Wahid had called for a "mutual liberation" (*musyawarah*) to be held at the state forest block that bordered on Wanasana. This *musyawarah* was called to gain consensus (*mufakat*) on land size and compensations, and to create a new peasant group under a peasant organisation called *Mandiri*. About 46 peasants arrived on foot or by motorcycles, mostly middle-aged or older men. About 35 people had registered beforehand with Pak Wahid in order to take part in the land sharing. The amount of land to be shared was 2.5 hectares, which was part of Block 11C. "We will share this land fairly and equally with those who do not have land yet," Pak Wahid proclaimed at the beginning of the meeting and then asked people to give their names. By the end of the day, there were 46 claims to the piece of land – everybody was to get a 480 $m^2$ plot with temporary land rights. This allocation of land rights differed from the SFC arrangements, according to which peasant day-labourers (*pesanggem*) were given the right to grow cassava for the first three years of the pine tree plantation management, as now the villagers independently decided who got rights to the land and what to plant there. At that time villagers thought they could gain long-term access to the area.

To implement the land distribution, Pak Wahid put together a team that would be responsible for measuring and marking out plots in the field, and whom he invited to meet in Pak Winaryo's house. Although poor and owning only a small piece of land, Winaryo was often involved in village head elections as a supporter of one of the candidates (and I was told that the candidate he supported won most of the elections). He was entitled to cultivate a piece of the village head's land (*tanah bengkok*) through the sharing system and, owing to his alliance with the village elite (especially the village head), he was an important gatekeeper of peasant organisations in the village. Besides, he was said to have spiritual power which he could use for good or bad purposes. Pak Wahid seemed to make sure that Pak Winaryo was involved in peasant mobilisation. As with those villagers who had been involved in forest stripping and violent clashes with the SFC, these forms of power offered important sources of authority.

Community bases of authority, therefore, included interpersonal relationships and the capacity to communicate with spirits and ancestors who were tied to the land and guarded it. The day after the meeting and the measuring of land plots, a forest ritual (*selamatan*) was held on the land in order to pacify the forest spirits, get their support and protection, and prevent conflicts among the peasants and between peasants and the SFC. Everybody was asked to submit to the decisions on compensations which were already made and to the sizes of the plots as they had been marked out. During the ritual Pak Wahid distributed small portions of food to everybody and Islamic prayers were offered. The peasants' effort to take control of the land was now blessed by the spirits, which would prevent conflicts between all the parties involved.

In the course of time I realised that for every tree planting or land sharing, a kind of ritual feast was led by Pak Wahid. Here, ritual was not only a local act but expressed a hybrid setting (Spyer, 1996, p. 43). Rituals made the forest work of the peasants public and integrated them into the larger political field in which district government officials, party members, union leaders and members, and even local religious figures were invited to take part. Thus, these ritual feasts translated peasant union, NGO activism, and universal principles, such as peasants' rights to land, into local language and belief. At the same time, the authority of villagers as legitimate rights holders was confirmed, as the spirits were on their side and would support

their struggle. This community-based authority was important to Pak Wahid. He had the power to ask permission and blessings from the spirits, making him a proper leader in a Javanese sense. There were, for example, many narratives told of angered forest spirits who caused trees to fall on people due to their misbehaviour in the area, and only powerful people were considered able to communicate with them and calm them down. Pak Wahid could also effectively negotiate in the conflict with the SFC and thus make it possible to reproduce the villagers' relations to the land and surrounding "nature" (*alam*). In addition, Pak Wahid added to his authority by constantly organising ritual feasts (*selamatan*) in the forests or in relation to state forest land events, thereby further legitimising his position as a peasant leader.

## *Peasant Organisations and Authority Building*

Pak Wahid, who had been recruited by the central Javanese peasant union SEPKUBA[5], started to mobilise peasants in his and neighbouring villages in support of the Regional Regulation Perda PSDHBM and peasants' rights to state forest land in the hope that peasants could continue to manage state forest lands through independent peasant organisations and share the harvest with SFC, with which they were in continual negotiation. This support took the form of demonstrations in which villagers (though not the village elite) and NGOs took part. Sometimes hundreds or even thousands of peasants from different villages demonstrated in front of the *District Assembly* building demanding new tree species for the state forest or refusing pine trees, and demanding the implementation of the new district regulation and the cancellation of the new forest management institutions created by the SFC respectively. The latter refer to the PHBM [forest management together with the community] and the LMDH [the forest village community institution] (DTE No. 55 Nov. 2002). In most cases the local NGO JKPM (*Jaringan Kerja Pemuda Muslim*) and SEPKUBA together with a smaller NGO called KOLING, mobilised the rallies.

Pak Wahid's own narrative, which he related to me in 2003, depicted him as the 'hero' in leading the negotiations and reaching agreement with the SFC; he felt he

5 SEPKUBA (*Serikat Petani Kedu, Banyumas* – Kedu and Banyumas Peasant's Union) is a local peasant union that was formed in 1999. It played an important role in visiting villages and building networks among the villagers, 'strengthening' them at the villages, and representing forest peasants in the district level meetings.

had started the negotiations which led to this outcome. In his narrative, the peasants were a strong force that had pressured the SFC until they were obliged to negotiate. Pak Wahid had further invited villagers to gather and share the state forest land plots in order to cultivate cash crops during unspecified periods and demand rights of access to land and the opportunity to plant new tree species. Pak Wahid's authority in this organisation and in village negotiations was recognised by everybody, although I was told that he dominated discussions and produced long monologues at the meetings. Yet, the villagers also had vivid memories of the 1960s and the military coup of President Suharto, when it became extremely dangerous to participate in anything other than state approved organisations. Everybody knew about the killings of hundred thousands of people who were considered communists and the imprisonment of many others. These violent events completely changed the political landscape, and no political mobilisation outside of extreme state control was possible due to the fear of punishment (Hadiz, 2011, p. 52). During the New Order government, peasant mobilisation took place through the official village peasant organisations which became channels for New Order development efforts, especially those connected with Green Revolution projects. Land reform or land claims were delicate issues that nobody would raise because of the fear of risking their lives. Pak Wahid told me that he was sometimes suspected of being a communist and his civil society connections were not at all approved by most of the village elite.

After the land distribution mentioned above, a new group, *Supitan* (an independent Forest Peasant Organisation or *Kelompok Tani Hutan* [KTH]), was formed by the people who had been given land plots in Block 11C. This organisation became part of the umbrella organisation Mandiri that was led by Pak Wahid. For several decades, the SFC had been creating village peasant organisations to manage the pine tree concessions around Wonosobo. Villagers who got a piece of land automatically became members in the SFC KTH, and ideally they were invited to meetings and had the responsibility of taking care of the plants or trees in their blocks and of following the rules of the organisation. When illegal loggings started, the SFC KTH in the village ceased to function. In 2001, Pak Wahid called on villagers managing state forest land and asked them to join the Mandiri KTH (*mandiri* translates as "independent", referencing the fact that it was not an official SFC organisation), the umbrella for the KTHs that operated in certain forest blocks. Under the Mandiri organisation, there

were six KTHs and, under them, 32 smaller Local Peasant Organisations (*Organisasi Tani Lokal* [OTL]) whose individual members managed the state forest blocks (with an approximate number of 20–35 members per OTL). By the time I resided in the village, Pak Wahid claimed that there were 850 peasant members in six organisations in Wanasana and neighbouring villages.

Pak Wahid included some heads of various neighbourhoods (*Rukun Tetangga* [RT]) in the organisation who were important allies for him as they could mobilise villagers in their immediate locales. He did not, however, invite the hamlet head (mentioned as advisor of the organisation), village head, or those officially part of the village power structure (*perangkat desa)* to most of the meetings. I argue that this was because they would have undermined Wahid's authority as they were above him in the village power structure, but also because they were his relatives. Nonetheless, the entire village elite was invited to the official inauguration meeting of the Mandiri organisation.

During my stay, Pak Wahid became a candidate in the village head elections. He had been village head in the mid-1990s, but due to various reasons (his struggle against corruption in the village elite, a scandalous extra-marital relationship) he had to withdraw after only one year. The village elite claimed that for this reason he was not a 'proper' leader or village head candidate as he could not control his emotions. However, his supporters considered him to be the man who had fought against corruption and authoritarian rule in the village and the only person who has the power to mobilise peasants to occupy state forest lands and negotiate with the SFC. Here, a different idea of authority building emerged legitimising Pak Wahid's work and position.

In his youth, Pak Wahid had been active first in the PPP (*Islamic Union Party*) and then (unofficially) in the PKB (*National Awakening Party*), which is a Muslim organisation. He had turned to the religion of Islam as a potential source of authority at that time, since the head of an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) located in the village had an almost familial relationship with his family. Pak Wahid had received his education from the *pesantren*, and his mother's uncle had given one hectare of land to the local Islamic leader (the *Kiyai*) to build a mosque and a *pesantren*, thereby adopting the leader into the family. Now, Pak Wahid stressed his 'modernist' Islamic or *santri* (more egalitarian than the Javanese hierarchical order, he claimed) orientation in the face of the village bureaucracy. However, it soon became clear that Pak Wahid did

not fulfil the new criteria for village head elections because he had only a primary school certificate and, according to new district legislation, he should have at least a secondary school certificate. With Wahid disqualified, there was finally only one remaining candidate who, not surprisingly, won the election.

Before the village head elections in 2003, Pak Wahid had mobilised hundreds of people in the distribution of land and many of them became his supporters in the village head elections. He also involved NGOs and peasant organisations at the village level, which was considered problematic by the village elite as civil society actors were often regarded as opposing the state or connected to communists. Some village elite members told me that Pak Wahid was self-interested (*pamrih*), too outspoken, and had a past which was inappropriate for a village head. However, his outspokenness and active role were qualities necessary for a land dispute negotiator or peasant movement leader. Again, the qualities suitable for the village head and peasant organiser seemed to differ a great deal, an issue I will explore in the following sections.

When the village head elections were over in July 2003, Pak Wahid's state forest activities increased dramatically, partly due to his disqualification. In August 2003, the peasant organisation he led was formalised in the village through an event (*upacara*), whereby Mandiri was named the village peasant organisation and became linked to the state. The practical aim of this move was to enable problem-free funding from the state as the district government was now demanding that organisations be officially recognised and fulfil certain criteria. The more obvious aim was to ritually publicise the authority of the organisation and Pak Wahid's authority to take over the forest land issue in the village. However, at the same time, the organisation ceased to be an independent peasant movement (as it was described in some places) and formally became a bureaucratic-rational organisation in the Weberian sense.

In the following weeks I could see Pak Wahid coming and going from the SFC office and organising peasant group meetings, which the NGOs and SEPKUBA sometimes attended. Furthermore, the SEPKUBA leader spent a lot of time in the village (or in the neighbouring Selokerto village), and often slept in Wahid's house. His visits in the village were supposed to strengthen and legitimise Pak Wahid's position and struggle for access to state forest land. In September 2003, about 60 villagers built a road to the state forest land as part of the programme. Similarly, another road was constructed in the following month. By the end of October 2003, the villagers, in co-

operation with SFC staff, planted mahogany seedlings on a plot which Pak Wahid had rented from a neighbour. The plan was to start planting mahogany in the state forest when the seedlings were high enough.

In a meeting held in the SFC office in the village in October 2003, seven staff members were present from the SFC with a higher officer from the Southern Kedu Unit office. Wahid arrived with a relative of his who was also a member of a peasant organisation from the neighbouring Selokerto village, and another man who belonged to the inner circle of the organisation, but whom I never saw taking part in forest management. Senior SFC staff took over the forum, outlining what was expected from the forest peasant groups: organisational structure, identity cards for all members, a forest management plan with all the details and calculations of capital input from the peasants. This meeting could be described as a turning point in the negotiation of the rights to state forest land at the village level as the position of the SFC staff was far stronger in the face of the few villagers present. Pak Wahid, meanwhile, seemed to be willing to accept the conditions set by the SFC.

The growing power of the SFC in village negotiations derived partly from the insecure and confusing situation at the district level where the district government was forced to cancel the Regional Regulation on community-based forest management which would have allowed peasants to have power over state forest land management surmounting that of the SFC. From 2000 on, Pak Wahid supported the local vice-district head, Pak Kholiq, from the Islamic-oriented PKB party. In 2004, Pak Kholiq campaigned for the position of district head, supporting the implementation of the Regional Regulation Perda PSDHBM and the local villagers in their efforts to continue their own state forest land management system; he achieved his goal in 2005 ("Bupati Wonosobo," 2005). Simultaneously, however, the SFC was lobbying the central and provincial governments which had superior power over the district government. During my stay in Wanasana, there were two forest management models (the district regulation-based PSDHBM and the SFC-based PHBM) circulating in the forest villages. Wanasana, as with many other villages, was now negotiating directly with the SFC, and NGOs facilitated this process to 'strengthen' them, but PSDHBM or community-based forest management did not have a clear legal basis. Furthermore, losing in the village head elections significantly reduced Pak Wahid's authority in the eyes of the SFC, the villagers, and the bureaucratic village elite alike. Villagers became

increasingly marginalised in district level settlement efforts and even at the village level they had limited say. When I visited the village in 2009, the SFC had founded an 'official' forest peasant organisation (KTH) in the village, and Pak Wahid's role as a peasant leader was unclear.

Why did Pak Wahid have difficulties in connecting with the village elite while he was recognised as the right person to lead peasant mobilisation and land distribution and negotiations with the SFC, at least initially? One reason was his linkage with extra-state actors who, on the one hand, became the source of his authority, but, on the other hand, challenged it because the village elite associated NGOs with the 'left': They were considered dangerous because they criticised the state, which during President Suharto's period was considered a subversive act likely to result in a prison sentence. The other reason relates to factors of status and tradition as a source of authority that have become embedded in the Javanese administration. Leadership in this land dispute was mostly based on different qualities of leadership than village leadership, as I will describe below.

### *Tradition as a Source of Authority*

Ward Keeler has noted that in Javanese society all interaction is about status (Keeler, 1987, pp. 26–27; Siegel, 1986). Behaviour and speech in an interaction signify people's status and one's position in the village structure and in the community. In the anthropological literature, Javanese custom or tradition – customary law (*adat*) – has been defined as the cosmos and the norms and principles that direct Javanese in their interactions (Anderson, 1990; Antlöv, 1995; Keeler, 1987; Pemberton, 1994). Such norms as being refined (*halus*) or being coarse (*kasar*), maintaining harmony (*rukun*), and working voluntarily for the community (*gotong royong*) have been mentioned as major principles in Javanese village custom. Siegel (1986, pp. 15–17) has effectively described how in a Javanese encounter speaking correctly is also behaving correctly, having social and linguistic implications. Javanese speech has different levels that mark the status of the speaker. By using the right level of language and tone (*ngoko* or *kromo*) one avoids upsetting the other partner to the exchange; sentences are for the listener, not for the speaker.

The notion of respect informs authority building in the village. Younger people, whatever their position, should offer respect to their elders. The village functionaries and other high status persons should be respected by those in lower positions. At the same time, if one fails to be respected, it is difficult to have authority in the eyes of the villagers. It is obvious that one should respect the elite members of the community and any kind of resistance (disrespect) is often interpreted by the village elite as harsh behaviour or stupidity. Pak Wahid was obviously considered 'harsh' because he was outspoken, contested village functionaries openly, and mobilised people in the village through peasant meetings and forest-related activities. Pak Wahid was a former village head and he had experience (*perjuangan*) in working for the village. He had, however, been expelled from his position because of his extra-marital affair and because, according to the new legislation, he did not fulfil the criteria for formal leadership (lacking a certificate of secondary education) and was therefore ineligible as a candidate. In other words, his power (in the Javanese sense) diminished quite suddenly, which in Javanese thinking may imply that his power had moved to someone else (Siegel, 1986, p. 36). Certainly, he could no longer gain support from the village elders and the village elite.

Ruling effortlessly is an important sign of one's power in Java (Siegel, 1986, p. 37) while using force is a sign of weakness. A Seloman hamlet head stated that he does not have to order (*menyuruh*) peasants to do anything, preferring that local neighbourhood heads see that community members do what is asked. Thus, he meets the smallest neighbourhood unit heads (RT) or sends them letters, and they pass information and directives onto those living in their locales. The village functionaries often noted that it is difficult to order or ask villagers to do something (especially those in a higher position or elders) because it does not feel comfortable. *Tidak enak* refers to the feeling (*rasa*) of being afraid of hurting somebody or lowering oneself by being harsh (*kasar*).

The inability or unwillingness to order or ask people to do something may relate to two core values of Javanese *adat*: *rasa* and *pamrih*. When theorising about Javanese culture in relation to Javanese administration, Anderson (1990, p. 54) suggested that the implications of Javanese cultural values encourage people not to act, lest they appear as if they wanted to gain something for themselves. Antlöv (1995, p. 164) claims that Sundanese leadership has been very much based on traditional authority even

in the state domain. Keeler (1987), deriving from Anderson (1990), relies on the idea of the potent king as a culturally directing image of a suitable leader, village head or *lurah*. In this sense, Pak Wahid's visible efforts to become a village head, and his activities concerning state forest land, raised suspicions and were sometimes interpreted as *pamrih*. The village elite seemed not to support his activities for this reason.

The New Order elite rested on the idea of a *power-full* leader, from the village up to the highest level of governance. It was visible in the way village officials governed and directed a village: effortlessly. During the New Order, if there were a problem in a village, as one elder village functionary told me, Brimob (Mobile Brigade – the Indonesian national police special operations force unit) would be called in, and they also used to arrive regularly and without invitation for larger village meetings (*lapanan*). In these cases the passive governance of the village elite became linked with the feared and violent state (police) in a curious way, given that the New Order regime used fear and violence to create order and stability (Siegel, 1986, p. 37).

Drawing on Foucault, Pemberton (1994) has criticised ethnographers for strengthening the New Order discourse on Javanese core values that marginalised struggles and conflicts. He claims that New Order discourse on Javanese culture and politics produced an ideology that stressed harmony, stability, and family-ness (*kekeluargaan*) to suppress conflicts (the negative side of *selamatan*) (pp. 14-15). New Order village elites stressed order and stability, marginalising harsh and disrespectful behaviour as dangerous. In this light, Pak Wahid's active role contradicted the dominant discourse of Javanese cultural identity as stressed by the New Order regime. Pak Wahid had to struggle with the village elite and SFC, while the support from the NGOs and peasant union were not enough to strengthen his position, or sometimes even undermined it, and for this reason Wanasana villagers failed to secure rights to the state forest land. In post-Suharto Java, however, it was possible for Pak Wahid to struggle for power and be supported by those parts of the village which had taken part in the land dispute, because of his extra-state sources of authority and the fall of a regime which had been shown to be corrupt in many ways.

## *Conclusion*

I have explored how people draw from different sources of authority in a post-Suharto, upland Javanese forest village in their struggle for state forest land. Taking a *hybrid* view on the formation of authority, my principal questions were: From what sources of authority do villagers draw and how does authority formation inform this forest land dispute and the relations between the state and society?

The case study examined here clearly indicates that the ideal of an exemplary centre and a powerful leader and authoritative figure informs authority building at the village level. However, as noted by Keeler (1987), villagers tend to resist the concentration of power in one person by distributing their loyalty and building alliances with many authority figures in order to reduce their dependency and protect their personal sovereignty. Thus, authority building is a two-way process: People build their authority by using different sources, on the one hand, and distribute their loyalty and create patron-client relations with numerous people, on the other. In the case of Pak Wahid, he gained followers by mobilising people in the land dispute, but the same people also built alliances with the village functionaries and his opponents in the village head elections who had upward connections.

During the New Order period, the bureaucracy became a dominant power source in ordering the lives of people. Bureaucracy was, however, informed by Javanese ideas of authority and power. Those owning land or belonging to powerful or wealthy families could gain a position in the official structure where they should behave according to their status position – passively, in a word. The New Order regime rhetoric stressed stability (*stabilitas*) as the basis of the Indonesian nation state, and the positions of the village elite and staff were related to a reinforcement of this order. Order was further buttressed by an imposed hierarchy and constant references to such concepts as *kasar, halus,* and *pamrih* in the village. However, new kinds of rationales for authority emerged too: Those having material wealth or education could gain authority as long as they were loyal to the ruling party (GOLKAR) and the state (*Pancasila*[6]).

6 *Pancasila* refers to the state philosophy of the Republic of Indonesia, i.e. 1) the belief in one God, 2) humanity that is just and civilised, 3) the unity of Indonesia, 4) democracy guided by the wisdom representative deliberation, and 5) social justice for all Indonesians.

Due to the changes in national politics (decentralisation), the withdrawal of President Suharto, public criticism of corrupt bureaucracy and politicians, and open contestation over state forest land new sources could be invoked. Villagers who wanted to gain access to land created patron-client relations with Pak Wahid (the landless or poor, illegal loggers, and jobless) and became his followers in the land struggle. For many, however, Pak Wahid was considered too active, harsh, and outspoken to become a village head, but these qualities became the basis of his authority in the land dispute making it possible for him to lead negotiations in the village and with the SFC.

In post-Suharto Java, leadership in the struggle for state forest land at the village level is embedded in the interaction of 'traditional' authority and administrative authority. Modern authority and village leadership are informed by certain Javanese qualities considered suitable for a leader. However, the villagers have new sources of authority due to national and local political changes. These new sources seemed to open space for innovative kinds of negotiations and to challenge the power of the SFC or traditional authority figures, while not bringing any real transformation of the power structure in the village or of that between the SFC and the villagers.

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