

## **Elite Capture Phenomenon and Political Dialogic Space: Reflections on the Folklore of *Asal Usul Raja Negeri Jambi* in the Current Political Situation**

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This research focuses on the process of political elite capture which is associated with the current political context and the dialogic space that occurs in the narrative text of the folklore *Asal Usul Raja Negeri Jambi* (AURNJ) [The Origins of the King of Jambi]. This study used a descriptive qualitative method. The data were obtained from the recording and documentation of Jambi folklore 2: *Asal Usul Raja Negeri Jambi* (AURNJ) by Kaslani (1997). The results of the analysis produce several conclusions. First, there are symptoms of the political phenomenon of elite capture of village elders in perpetuating their power in the election of the King of Jambi. Second, this phenomenon also fostered the practice of dynastic familism. In the belief of village elders, the king must be chosen from their lineage, meaning that people in their circle are worthy to be king. Third, the deadlock in finding a leader figure was experienced by village elitist elders in the political contestation of the election of the king. This stalemate then awakened the elite village elders to open equal participatory dialogue spaces. This is nothing but to open up opportunities for candidates for kingship outside their circle of power. Fourth, the paradox of elite capture political dynamics in AURNJ's story describes a situation similar to contemporary political phenomena, namely the thirst for power and building political dynasties for personal and group interests as a security strategy and perpetuation of the arena of exposure to power.

**Keyword:** *Elite Capture, Dialogic Space, Asal Usul Raja Negeri Jambi*

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## INTRODUCTION

Research focusing on elite capture theory and dialogic space is mostly centered on political economy, development policy, and practical politics. Several studies show that elite capture tends to have superior social, political, and economic status and has a considerable influence on the development process or control over policymaking. Moreover, most of them also lead to corruption and political dynasties (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2005; Coe, 2016; Dutta, 2009; Firdaus, 2018; Fritzen, 2007; Kumar et al., 2020; Musgrave & Wong, 2016; Platteau, 2009; Rajasekhar et al., 2018; SHA, 2021). Meanwhile, research targeting dialogic space in the public sphere describes problems related to the citizen's freedom of expression which can only occur in a democratic political situation (Abugaza, 2013; Faedlulloh et al., 2017; Habermas, 1992; Jati, 2016; Nurfathiyah, 2021; Ruman, 2013). The two theories are mostly concerned with research centered on real political conditions and not much on the political realities depicted in folklore. Folklore is also a medium for expressing a social event (Bunanta, 1998; Bunanta & MacDonald, 2003).

Research on folklore associated with politics is fairly popular in the scientific realm. The intertwining concept of sociopolitical reflection and folklore texts is the epicenter of collective memory related to local political knowledge that influences past and present political phenomena. Bakar, (2013) Bakar examines Malay folklore concerning the worldview and political system of Malay society. The interweaving of traditional civilization with modern state development in conveying Malay folklore invites the public to understand the importance of symbols of power and the king's interests in the task of managing the country at the top of the social hierarchy.

Hastuti, (2016) also highlights the emergence and political involvement of Javanese women which are abstracted from legends, folklore, and language. Her findings describe the victory of women's political participation in regional head election competitions in Banyuwangi (East Java) and Kebumen (Central Java) in 2005. The victory of these female politicians was presumably due to the incarnation of female heroes who were respected in local history (folklore and legends), or as a person who gets sacredness from the cultural legitimacy of the Yogyakarta Palace which places women as the cosmic center in Javanese cosmology. In addition, there is the involvement of regional languages in the construction of narratives of collective identity and

ideal gender norms (attached to female figures) which also foster group sympathy and political electability. Besides, oral tradition in folklore also functions as a tool to tell the political history of a region. Yuliantari's findings (2020) show that Loke Ngerang's story is a representation of the political history of the Manggarai people. This folklore becomes a symbol that describes political power in the past in fighting for influence/power, consequences, and the views of the Manggarai people towards foreign influences (outside their territory).

Folklore closely related to politics is also often used as a way to express resistance, as shown by Matthews, (2015) and McGregory, (2015) who highlight black folklore and representations of racial political violence. This story is part of the efforts to fight against black people for political supremacy which is very racial in America. Folklore is also a medium for expressing social and political realities. This is in line with the findings of Mould, (2020) regarding welfare, politics, and folklore in overcoming narrative bias toward public assistance in the US. His findings explain that the negative views depicted through folklore from non-aid recipients about recipients of the welfare system are in a binary position. This is caused by negative views that are told incompletely because they ignore narratives that reflect and create narratives, contexts, and stereotypes about welfare.

There are many inherited oral traditions such as folklore that grow and develop in the community's collective memory. Folklore as an oral record of the past which is inherited and believed to be sacred can be used as a reflection of facing challenges in the future. Likewise, the folklore from Jambi province is heavily influenced by historical and cultural factors of the Malay kingdom. One of the legendary folklore that is quite popular in Jambi society is *Asal Usul Raja Negeri Jambi*. This story is categorized as oral folklore in the form of a legend (Danandjaja, 1997). Research on *Asal Usul Raja Negeri Jambi* has also been conducted by Afifah, (2022), Hariandi et al., (2021), Hikmah et al., (2022), Wilyanti & Wulandari, (2021) and Hariandi et al., (2021) which focus more on reviewing ethical values or values forming the character of children in Jambi folklore as a source of teaching materials. Palupi & Prayoga, (2020) have also discussed folklore from literary and political sociology perspectives, particularly regarding reflections on democratic values and statesmanship in folklore *Asal Usul Raja Jambi and Mentiko Betuh*. The findings underscore that the social reflections in AURNJ's stories contain ideal democratic

mechanisms such as egalitarian, tolerant, strong cooperation solidarity, and consensus-reaching.

Elite capture is a concept that was initially widely applied to political economy approaches (R. Putnam, 1976; R. D. Putnam, 1977; Stokes et al., 2013). It is a kind of piracy by the elites –power domination of groups of people who only prioritize their interests as the main goal in practical politics (Firdaus, 2017). In the same idea about elite capture –where all resources are taken over by several individuals who occupy strategic positions economically, politically, or ethnically can influence decision-making aimed at obtaining benefits for their group, such actions are often considered corrupt (Goodfellow, 2017; Musgrave & Wong, 2016; SHA, 2021).

Elite capture arises from elites' condition who have superior relations than the others (outside of elitist status). Bardhan & Mookherjee, (2005) state that the elite capture threat describes the symptoms of a political dynasty, namely political power controlled by individuals or groups who have hereditary relations. This elite has the power to control based on the accumulation of resources (economic, political, social) to influence practical political collective decisions (Musgrave & Wong, 2016). In the same sense, elite capture is believed to occur when a group of elites in many cases are politically and/or economically "powerful" people in manipulating decision-making and various agendas for their interests (Dutta, 2009; Platteau, 2009; Rajasekhar et al., 2018; Wong, 2010). The practice of elite capture is a serious threat to democracy, namely corruption and the perpetuation of political dynasties (Afolabi, 2019; Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2005; Hodzi, 2018; Sujarwoto, 2015).

Based on Habermas, (1992) concept, a space that can provide various opportunities to voice discussions without pressure from the authorities, and express various circulations of discourse freely in a dialogic space without the intervention of power or formal institutions. This space in principle guarantees the freedom to open dialogue spaces without class, ethnic, racial, and religious barriers. It was agreed by Faedlulloh et al., (2017) who combine the notion of public space and deliberative democracy which clearly emphasizes space for collective interaction that can be controlled and managed collectively, equally, and open to all levels of society. Ruman, (2013) suggests that public space can only be realized if deliberative democracy is implemented, where every public space allows everyone to speak and discuss community-related issues.

Furthermore, Lubenow, (2012) by reinforcing Habermas' idea, views public space as a space that can mediate the political system, the state, and even the private sector in the context of state politics. In public space or dialogic space, it is not an institution, but a space that can appear anywhere, can discursive public issues that can be voiced (aspirations and interests) of citizens without totalitarian oversight by the state, and demands openness and humility to dialogue, especially from the voices of marginalized or vulnerable groups (Abugaza, 2013; Jati, 2016; Ruman, 2013). Giddens, (2009) also sees this dialogic space within the framework of dialogical democracy, namely the active capability of every citizen to foster trust in the integrity of others, where the process of dialogue does not continuously become a solution to conflicts that fuel social isolation (division) —ethnic division, ethnicity, religion) but belief as a means to organize social relations that enable individuals or groups to undergo social harmonization in interactions with one another. On the other hand, interesting findings are from Nurfathiyah, (2021) who looks at the public space and dialogic communication that exists between jungle people and the government, private sector, and NGOs which emphasizes that public space is in the form of community radio as a form of evaluative voice for jungle people to be able to discuss, dialogue, and deliberation in overcoming the issue of forest authority monopoly. Dialogical space implicitly can take the form of an entity of an egalitarian public space, emancipatory in favor of the voices of individuals or vulnerable and marginalized groups, and able to voice various common interests without social restrictions and political preferences.

On the other hand, research that specifically addresses the concept of elite capture, dialogic space, and political phenomena in a folk tale has not received much attention. These two concepts (elite capture and dialogic space) are more elaborated in research on political economy, practical politics, and development policies or programs. This becomes interesting in filling the gap between practical political reality and imagined political reality in the narrative of a folk tale. Although this paper takes the same object as Palupi & Prayoga's research (2020), namely the AURNJ folklore. However, unlike previous research, this research specifically investigates the process of political elite capture which is linked to current political phenomena and the formation of a dialogic space for village elders in searching for the figure of the King of Jambi.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. It is based on the form of this research data in the form of words, expressions, and sentences contained in the story text of *Asal Usul Raja Negeri Jambi* (1997). In addition, according to Mayring, (2014), content analysis is used to more comprehensively interpret and explore the hidden context in the exposure of the narrative text of AURNJ. The data collection was done through critical reading and careful note-taking. As the mastermind of this study, the researchers interpreted each data, deeply understood the phenomenon and revealed the folklore meaning associated with political phenomena in Jambi, and put the labelling of the meaning of this folklore expression into discursive theoretical terms of elite capture and dialogical space. The meaning of this term was then reflected on the current political situation in Jambi.

The primary data source in this study was the results of recording and documenting the folklore of Jambi 2: *Asal Usul Raja Negeri Jambi* (AURNJ) by Kaslani, (1997). AURNJ's story was chosen purposively which is in line with Creswell's explanation (Creswell, 2014). This is based on two things, namely the potential of the characters, and the storyline of AURNJ depicting representations of political contestation (Palupi & Prayoga, 2020), and the basis for the story of AURNJ by Kaslani, (1997) is highlighted more by previous research on reflection on ethical values (values forming children's character) for learning materials (Afifah et al., 2023; Hariandi et al., 2021; Hikmah et al., 2022), while from the perspective of political sociology and literature, much has not been revealed. Meanwhile, secondary data, as research support, was obtained from literature reviews in the form of articles, research reports, and research journals related to the research focus. To validate the data, the theoretical triangulation technique was used (Bachri, 2010; Denzin, 2012), namely by cross-checking based on the interweaving of the theory of dialogic space and elite capture with the data presented in AURNJ's story.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A brief story of AURNJ

The story of *Asal Usul Raja Negeri Jambi* is quite well-known among the people of Jambi. Given its popularity, the story has also been categorized as one of the Indonesian intangible cultural heritages by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology in 2012 (Direktorat Warisan dan Diplomasi Budaya Kementerian

Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2012). This story began with the agreement of the elders of five villages in Jambi to find a king who could unite them. There were several criteria set by the elders for their leaders, including being wise, being old, and having a high degree. Each village sent its appointed representative to become the candidate for king. The elders also tested the eligibility of the candidate for the king with severe tests, such as being tested for resistance from fire, being drowned in boiling water, bowed with arrows, and being crushed with hard metal.

Each of the chosen royal candidates from each village's cousin was unable to pass the tough test until finally the elders of the five villages determined to find another candidate for the king of Jambi. After passing through various obstacles, the five elders arrived at a country of rivets. After going around and looking for a candidate for the king, they received the news that there was someone who was considered strong, in one of the villages in Negeri Keling, who was able to undergo this series of severe tests. All stages of the tough test could be conquered by the candidate from the land of Keling Titu. As a result, the elders brought the good news to Jambi, prepared all the necessities, built a palace, and inaugurated the coronation of the rivet as the king of Jambi.

### The Phenomenon of Village Elders' Elite Capture: Reading Elitic Political Movements from AURNJ to Recent Political Reality

Village elders (Batin Duo Belas Village, Tujuh Koto Village, Petajin Village, Muaro Sebo Village) are of an elitist social status as depicted in this story. Chris, (2011) underlined the elite as the top position of an important structure in society in the economy, politics, religion, military, and government. Contemporary elites in the meaning of political sociology and political science are based on the idea that a few people or minorities hold power (power and domination) over the majority of society, they have all the resources (material and/or symbolic), occupy key positions, and networks that possess the ability to control power disputes (López, 2013; Reis, 2005; Yamokoski & Dubrow, 2008). In the context of AURNJ's story, they (the elite) represent the voices of each represented village. This story places village elders as political elites who represent the voices of the villages they represent. Ideally, village elders become political elites without being ridden by the subjective interests of their respective villages. The interests of power are not driven by greed but are purely more about voicing the voices and common interests of the villages they represent. Moral considerations are also the basis for them to

find a king who can nurture and protect them. Such an ideal political elite mechanism is illustrated in a quote from the folklore AURNJ as follows.

*“...Dahulu, jauh sebelum adanya wilayah kesultanan ini, di negeri Jambi telah berdiri lima buah desa, namun belum memiliki seorang pemimpin atau raja. Untuk itu, para sesepuh dari kelima desa tersebut bersepakat untuk mencari seorang raja yang dapat memimpin dan mempersatukan kelima desa tersebut. Kelima desa tersebut yaitu Tujuh Koto, Sembilan Koto, Petajin, Muaro Sebo, dan Batin Duo Belas. Sesepuh dari lima desa tersebut merupakan perwakilan yang sangat di-tuakan, orang bijak, pemimpin kaum dan orang yang memiliki derajat tinggi...” (Kaslani, 1997)*

[“...In the past, long before the existence of this sultanate in Jambi, there were five villages, but they did not yet have a leader or king. For this reason, the elders of the five villages agreed to find a king who could lead and unite the five villages. The five villages are Tujuh Koto, Sembilan Koto, Petajin, Muaro Sebo, and Batin Duo Belas. The elders of the five villages are very senior representatives, wise men, clan leaders and people of high rank...”] (Kaslani, 1997)

The mechanism in AURNJ's story experiences political turmoil. There was friction between the elitist elders. The elders from the five villages saw that in Negeri Jambi there was a leadership (king) vacuum. The vacancy of a leader forced all the elders to find a king who could unite the people of the five villages. The problem of uniting the wishes of the elders and the people of the five villages was deadlocked because each of the people of the five villages wanted representatives from the five villages to lead to become king. This phenomenon is read in a political approach as elite capture or piracy by the elite. For the elite village elders, the election of the king became an arena for exposing power as well as sharpening the elite's influence on this contestation. Worse, the election of the king was deadlocked due to the insistence of the elders' desire to stick representatives of each village to become king. This phenomenon, according to Firdaus' reading (2017) is elite capture, in which the phenomenon of domination of power from a handful of people or groups puts forward their interests as

goals in the arena of exposure to power. This can be seen in the quote from AURNJ's story as follows.

*“...siapa diantara saudara—saudara yang bersedia atau mencalonkan diri menjadi raja? Kata salah seorang tokoh dari Batin Duo Belas, yang segera disambut oleh tokoh sesepuh masing—masing desa: Kami dari Tujuh Koto sanggup, kami dari Sembilan Koto sanggup, kami dari Petajin dan Muaro Sebo, sanggup. Apalagi kami dari Batin Duo Belas, pasti sanggup...” (Kaslani, 1997)*

[“... which of you is willing or running for a king? One of the figures from Batin Duo Belas said, who was immediately greeted by the elders of each village: We from Tujuh Koto can do it, we from Sembilan Koto can do it, we from Petajin and Muaro Sebo can do it. What's more, we from Batin Duo Belas can do it...”] (Kaslani, 1997)

*“...Dengan penuh semangat, seluruh sesepuh kembali ke desa masing-masing untuk menunjuk salah seorang warganya untuk mewakili desa mereka dalam ujian tersebut. Tentunya masing-masing desa berharap memenangkan ujian tersebut. Oleh karena itu, mereka akan memilih warga yang dianggap paling sakti di antara mereka...” (Kaslani, 1997)*

[“...With great enthusiasm, all the elders returned to their respective villages to appoint one of their residents to represent their village in the exam. Of course, each village hopes to win the test. Therefore, they will choose the residents who are considered the most sacred among them...”] (Kaslani, 1997)

The text quotation from the folklore above shows symptoms of the will for the power of the village elder elitists. The five village elders bravely and loudly agreed to become king candidates. Village elders only make direct appointments to members of their village who they think are capable of passing the test. The direct appointment did not go through the village consultation process. Village elders' decisions tend to be potentially subjective (appointed only to their elite circle), not through a feasibility process, because feasibility and truth lie only in the "glasses" of the elite village elders. This can be called a step of piracy by the elite village

elders. This step does not seem to provide space for the participation of the outer circle, meaning that the unilateral determination of eligibility and truth only tends to come from the eyes of the village's elite elders. This closed the involvement of people outside the elite circle of village elders. This step of directly appointing village elders illustrates the closing of opportunities outside their circle to become kings. The elite steps of the village elders were probably guided by the belief that the chosen king should not come from outside the lineage and elite nobility (Astrea, 2017). The indication that a king must be based on heredity becomes the legitimacy of the view of the will for the power of these elder elites. The views derived from kings must become kings, and those of slaves must become slaves. This forced binding view legitimizes the perpetuation of the status of the ruler not far from the point of exposure of his power. Opportunities for people of different classes (beyond the elite), especially for heredity, are the cover for those who want to be involved in the contest to become a king.

In interpreting contemporary political phenomena, the description of AURNJ's story is a small portrait of the perpetuation of power through political dynasties. Elite domination will only trigger aristocratic tendencies, arrogance, and selfishness. Centralization of power without the distribution of power will lead to the perpetuation of power. The elite power of village elders from the hereditary structure will not be easily removed from its influence. Rakatama and Qurniati in Rachmawan, (2021) define elite capture as an opportunity to exploit influence (authority) over power to increase capabilities, which are obtained more by elites, figures, or leaders of a group. Elite capture occurs because elites have superior relations more than those owned by others (other people outside of elitist status). In addition, the practice of elite capture is a serious threat, namely giving birth to political dynasties. The views of Bardhan & Mookherjee, (2005) and Sujarwoto, (2015) also emphasized that the threat of elite capture practices creates symptoms of a political dynasty, namely political power exercised by a handful or groups who have hereditary or kinship relations.

The elite capture phenomenon exhibited by the elite elders of the five villages in the AURNJ folklore narrative describes the real reality of the dynamics of contemporary political practices. Djati, (2013) explains that kinship (familism) is a force in political dynasties at the local level. Powers that take advantage of kinship relations in political dynasties at the local level by appointing relatives (relatives) in power circles are more influenced by preferences

to secure power. Sutisna, (2017) sees the emergence of symptoms of the proliferation of political dynasties in Banten during the leadership era of Governor Ratu Atut Chosiyah showed that the practice of political dynasties during the era of Ratu Atut's leadership showed symptoms of a wider distribution of power (proliferation and growth), not only in the realm of power. executive and legislative, but also spread in many arenas of public life, such as the arenas of business life, socio-culture, education, and social organizations. The reality of the weakening of democracy like political dynasties like this covers not only the political sphere but also the arena of people's lives. The absence of public control makes absolute power in one force threaten the principle of democracy itself.

Besides that, another example is the political dynasty of the rulers of South Sumatra, quoted from Tirta.id. This political dynasty runs the Noerdin clan's line of power, which was started by Noerdin Pandji in 1960 who entered politics as chairman of the Local House of Representatives ('Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah' or DPRD) of South Sumatra (had been nominated for governor). Furthermore, in 2001, Noerdin Pandji's son, Alex Noerdin became his father's political successor as Regent of Musi Banyuasin. In 2008 Alex Noerdin then became governor of South Sumatra for two terms until 2018. In 2009, his son, Dody Reza was elected to the House of Representatives ('Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat' or DPR) and in 2017 served as Regent of Musi Banyuasin (Matanasi, 2019). Not stopping there, the family clan breeds have also enlivened the political contestation in Jambi Province (the origin of AURNJ folklore).

Ahmad's findings (2018) focus on the Nurdin clan as local strongmen in maintaining power in Jambi, illustrating the threat of elite capture by local Jambi strongmen (Zulkifli Nurdin) who demonstrated the trajectory of his political dynasty in local political contestation. Starting with being the governor of Jambi for two terms (1999-2010), Zulkifli Nurdin's progress then continued in his movement to win Zumi Zola (child) in the political battle for the governor of Jambi in 2015. Not ending there, the findings of Z. Ahmad et al., (2020) also emphasize the continuity of the dynasty of the Zulkifli Nurdin clan in the National Mandate Party. Zulkifli Nurdin's important influence was enormous in building his political dynasty through National Mandate Party ('Partai Amanat Nasional' or PAN). Hazrin Nurdin (younger brother) was elected by acclamation as chairman of the Regional Leaders Council ('Dewan Pimpinan Wilayah' or DPW) of PAN. Ratu Munawaroh Zulkifli (wife) together with Haji Bakri

(a person close to Zulkifli Nurdin), through the PAN political party vehicle, became members of the Indonesian Parliament. Finally, in 2015 Zulkifli Nurdin made his son, Zumi Laza (Zumi Zola's younger brother) chairman of the Regional Leaders Council ('Dewan Pimpinan Daerah' or DPD) of PAN Jambi. This phenomenon illustrates the practice of local strongmen as elite capture, in which the carriages of the Zulkifli Nurdin clan who have access to great power over superior economic and political resources in Jambi can be used as a tool to perpetuate power. The same thing is described in AURNJ's story, where kinship (political dynasty) from the origin of one village becomes a form of control to maintain the throne of the king's power. Each village of the five elitist elders insisted that only those from their village deserved to be the king of Jambi. On the other hand, Tirtosudarmo, (2022) agrees that the phenomenon of elite capture shows the practice of superior political-economic cartel relations as a determinant of directions that are centralized and related to the party system. It cannot be denied that the current elections and local elections look democratic from the outside, but actually, transactional political transactions are happening behind them. Democracy is only a commodity traded by political party cartels.

### Dialogic Room amongst Village Elders

This story describes the condition of the sultanate in Jambi. Jambi Country has five villages led by elders, namely Tujuh Koto, Sembilan Koto, Petajin, Muaro Sebo, and Batin Duo Belas. The village elders represent the leaders of the people who have a high degree. In this story, a political process is depicted, in which the issue of the "status quo" or the vacancy of the king's leadership arises. This crisis brought together the five villages to agree to reduce the chaos and disputes that could divide them. Even with the royal system, the political process depicted in this story is very democratic. The problem of finding a king figure is no longer through the process of aristocratic descent but through "political battles" such as contests. If likened to the reality of today's society, the battle is like the election contestation of politicians through political parties.

Referring to the thoughts of Habermas, (1992), public space is defined as a space where people can discuss and express various circulating discourses freely as well as interact and speak out without any pressure from authorities or formal institutions. In principle, public space guarantees freedom to open dialogic spaces from all social entities and promotes equality of class, ethnicity, race, and religion. Faedlulloh et al., (2017) combine the idea of public space based on deliberative democracy with their

findings which show the character of public space as a space for community interaction. This space is managed and controlled collectively for the common good and is open to all without exception.

On the other hand, Endraswara's (2014) transitional politics of the aristocratic style of sengkuni emphasizes leaders who are firsthand, side with the people. The elders of the five villages from this folklore have almost the same fundamental similarities between elders and priyayi. Elders from the five villages in the country of Jambi have community representation. There is a common interest that these elders strive for. The dialogic space depicted in this story is that there is a collective agreement in determining the requirements for the ability to become a king. The agreement was born from accommodating all the interests of the elders who were representatives of the people of their village.

The agreed terms of ability include that a king must be physically and mentally strong. A king must be strong through the test of being burned, soaked in boiling water, used as cannonballs to be fired, and ground in an iron refinery. This condition was born from the consensus of the village elders, who had to exceed the limits of the abilities of the elder heroes from each village. The candidate for the King is a figure that is expected to be a strong leader.

At some point, the problem comes a deadlock. The heroes from each village were unable to pass the final stage of the test which was grinding with an iron refinery. The final test of the fourth stage shows the physical and spiritual abilities of each hero, it is proven that the heroes have suffered many injuries and lost their supernatural powers when grinding with an iron refinery. After there were no representatives from the five village elders, they agreed to look for a candidate for the king of Jambi who was truly powerful and able to pass the test. They finally looked for a candidate for Jambi king from another country. A debate arose among the elders. This is illustrated in examples of story quotes, namely:

*"...Sebelum kita memilih seorang raja di antara kita, bagaimana kalau terlebih dahulu kita tentukan kriteria raja nan akan kita pilih. Menurut kalian, apa kriteria raja nan baik itu?" tanya sesepuh dari Desa Batin Duo Belas membuka pembicaraan dalam pertemuan tersebut..."(Kaslani, 1997)*

[“...Before we choose a king among us, how about we first determine the criteria for the king we will choose. According to you, what are the criteria of a good king?” asked the elders from Duo Belas Inner Village to open the discussion at the meeting...”] (Kaslani, 1997)

In the text quoted above there is a "two-way" dialogic process amongst the elders who act as representatives of village leaders. This finding is similar to Hendry B. Mayo in Budiardjo, (2003) who argues that the dialogic process was born from dialogue without pressure and coercion, tolerance for diversity, freedom of expression, and aspirations. This practice is implicit in the folklore of the Origin of the King of Jambi. Hardiman, (2010) states that social space is formed from intense social interaction and communication relations. Dialogical space as a social space is based on the process of intense social interaction and communication relations to give birth to trust (Giddens, 2009). This belief is a fundamental aspect of the dialogue space between the elders. It can be seen from persuasive communication.

Furthermore, a dialogic process also occurs when starting to determine the criteria for a candidate for the king. As illustrated in the example of a story quote, namely:

*“...Sebelum kita memilih seorang raja di antara kita, bagaimana kalau terlebih dahulu kita tentukan kriteria raja nan akan kita pilih. Menurut kalian, apa kriteria raja nan baik itu?” tanya sesepuh dari Desa Batin Duo Belas membuka pembicaraan dalam pertemuan tersebut. “Menurut saya, seorang raja harus memiliki kelebihan di antara kita,” jawab sesepuh dari Desa Tujuh Koto. “Ya, Benar! Seorang raja harus lebih kuat, baik lahir maupun batin,” tambah sesepuh dari Desa Petajin. “Saya sepakat dengan pendapat itu. Kita harus memilih raja nan disegani dan dihormati,” sahut sesepuh dari Desa Muaro Sebo. “Apakah kalian semua setuju dengan pendapat tersebut?” tanya sesepuh dari Desa Batin Duo Belas. “Setuju!” jawab peserta rapat serentak...” (Kaslani, 1997)*

[“...Before we choose a king among us, how about we first determine the criteria for the king we will choose. According to you, what are the criteria of a good king?” asked the elder from

Batin Duo Belas Village to open the discussion at the meeting. "In my opinion, a king must have advantages over us," replied the elder from Tujuh Koto Village. "Yes, right! A king must be stronger, both physically and mentally," added the elder from Petajin Village. "I agree with that opinion. We have to choose a king who is respected and respected," said the elder from Muaro Sebo village. "Do you all agree with that opinion?" asked the elder from the Inner Duo Twelve Villages. "Agree!" answered the meeting participants in unison...”] (Kaslani, 1997)

*“...Semua wakil dari kelima desa tersebut gagal melalui ujian, maka mereka pun kembali mengadakan musyawarah. “Bagaimana kalau kita mencari calon raja Jambi dari negeri lain?” usul sesepuh dari Desa Batin Duo Belas. Usulan tersebut diterima oleh peserta rapat lainnya. Selanjutnya mereka mengutus dua wakil dari setiap desa untuk pergi mencari calon raja. Keesokan harinya, rombongan itu berangkat meninggalkan Negeri Jambi menuju ke negeri-negeri di sekitarnya...” (Kaslani, 1997)*

[“...All the representatives from the five villages failed the test, so they again held deliberations. "What if we look for a candidate for Jambi king from another country?" the proposal of the elders from the Batin Duo Belas Village. The proposal was accepted by the other meeting participants. Then they sent two representatives from each village to go find a candidate for the king. The next day, the group left Jambi for the surrounding countries...”] (Kaslani, 1997)

The quote above describes the space for social interaction and communication between elders and the community in setting the ideal conditions for a candidate for king. This requirement was accommodated from the consensus results of the will of the people of the five villages. Several times, compromise and confirmation statements emerged to strengthen collective decisions. Not only that, this participatory dialogic space opens up a common voice space among the elite village elders to look for a figure of a king from another country. The elders felt that their choice was not worthy of being the leader of the king based on the conditions they had



previously agreed to. Opening the choice of a king who is not from their class is a consensus process that would violate the king's royal power based on ancestry or nobility. This consensus was a step to dampen the will to power of the village's elitist elders. Every village elitist elder eventually realized that the correctness and appropriateness of their choice were not entirely correct.

*"...Sudah berpuluh-puluh negeri mereka singgahi, namun belum menemukan seorang pun yang bersedia menjadi raja Jambi, karena tidak sanggup menjalani keempat ujian tersebut. Rombongan itu pun kembali mengadakan musyawarah..."* (Kaslani, 1997)

[*"...They have visited dozens of countries but have not found anyone willing to become king of Jambi, because they are unable to undergo the four tests. The delegation again held deliberations..."*] (Kaslani, 1997)

*"...Sabar, Saudara! Kita jangan cepat putus asa. Kita memang belum menemukan calon raja Jambi di beberapa negeri yang dekat ini. Tetapi, saya yakin bahwa di negeri jauh sana kita akan menemukan orang yang kita cari," kata wakil Desa Muaro Sebo. "Kami setuju!" sahut wakil dari Desa Batin Duo Belas, Tujuh Koto, dan Sembilan Koto. "Kalau begitu, kami juga setuju," kata wakil Desa Petijan. Setelah berhari-hari diombang-ambing oleh gelombang laut di tengah samudera yang luas itu, mereka pun tiba di Negeri Keling (India)..."* (Kaslani, 1997)

[*"...Be patient, Brother! We must not despair. We have yet to find a candidate for the king of Jambi in several countries close to this. However, I am sure that in a distant land, we will find the people we are looking for," said the representative of Muaro Sebo village. "We agree!" said the representatives from the Inner Villages Duo Belas, Seven Koto, and Nine Koto. "In that case, we also agree," said the representative of Petijan Village. After days of being swayed by sea waves in the middle of*

*the vast ocean, they arrived in Negeri Keling (India)..."*] (Kaslani, 1997)

The folklore of AURNJ in this context has the necessary dialogic space to facilitate attitude determination and the formation of public opinion by placing the elite position of village elders in an independent space, where various issues can be debated and dialogued on. Elders represent the people of the five villages who can relinquish influence and domination for the common good. This is evident from the agreement based on mutual consensus without any coercion of the elder's will. Dialogical space in this story means giving discursive space in solving all problems through equal dialogue among elders who have the same position in speaking out, without any dominating interests. The political mechanism of community representation run by village elders is an impetus for creating local community participation in decision-making. The diversity of village backgrounds encourages a more even distribution of power among village elders (Batin Duo Belas Village, Tujuh Koto Village, Petajan Village, Muaro Sebo Village) so that political consensus and stability are maintained. This dialogic space instead builds a mechanism of checks and balances as a controller for the authorities not to abuse their power.

## CONCLUSION

Reading political phenomena in AURNJ's story is part of getting a textual interpretation of the political realities that play in the story's narrative. Folklore about the origins of the King of Jambi in this article describes two things of distortion in politics. First, there is a political phenomenon that tends to be negative, namely the maneuvers of village elders within the framework of the threat of elite capture. The village elite elders in AURNJ's story describe a political process that exploits the accumulation of superior resources about strengthening their ability to expose their power. This elite captures the power and then forms a political dynasty environment that is used as a tool to perpetuate power. AURNJ's stories become the epicenter horizon of collective memory related to local political knowledge that influences past and present political realities. The reading of meaning through AURNJ's story truly illustrates the current movement of elitist politics, where all sources of superiority have the will to fight for power politically by perpetuating political dynasties based on familism. The chaotic politics of village elders depicted in AURNJ's story has

become a plot twist in the dynamics of democracy which is linked to the current political context.

Second, all the shock effects of the village elitist elders presented in the text of AURNJ's folklore insert political symptoms that tend to be positive, namely the existence of a dialogic space opened by the village elitist elders. This space describes the ideal democratic process. It started with a chaotic mess full of political intrigue in the election of the king, and in the process, the election experienced a deadlock, because none of the elite elders were able to pass the pre-agreed test conditions. The terms presented through the consensus process did not turn out to be a smooth path for the elder champions to win the contest in the election of the king of Jambi. This is inseparable from the belief that a king should not be chosen outside of their lineage and nobility (village elite elders). Hijacking by elite village elders who do not provide space for participation in the involvement of people outside of their circle threatens a leadership crisis. The absence of the eligibility for the village elders to become kings has opened their storyline to let the position of the king be filled from outside these five clans. This is proven based on mutual consensus without any coercion of the elder's will. This consensus was born from an equal dialogue process among elders who have the same position in speaking out and without any dominating interests. Finally, a chosen king appears that fits the criteria. This king was someone outside of the five villages with no relation to the elders.

Apart from the two political distortions depicted in AURNJ's story, at least the lessons that can be learned from this folklore text related to contemporary political realities are: first, there should be no coercion of power through descent and close relations (political dynasty). Opening space for the participation of people outside the circle of descent and close relations as well as providing the widest possible opportunity for anyone to become a leader regardless of the inherent socio-cultural background of that person can find the right leader. Second, opening up dialogue space to agree on determining which candidate for the king is chosen outside their circle. There is no coercion of the will to bring out the king from among themselves. Third, the ruling elite does not arbitrarily take advantage of their superiority to strengthen themselves, thereby oppressing people outside of their circle. Fourth, elite capture, which is reflected in the political phenomena of the elite elders of AURNJ's story, is a lesson that not opening egalitarian communication channels will form a political dynasty that is only centered on the absolute power of a few people,

which ultimately undermines the contestation of democracy itself.

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