

Subtheme V: Election, Democracy and Human Rights in Asia

SPECIAL AUTONOMY STATUS AND THE SELF-DETERMINATION ASPIRATION IN PAPUA: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF POLITICAL DYNAMICS

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This paper attempts to critically examine the special autonomy status granted by the State of Indonesia and of its practices in the Papua region. Within the broader context of its historical trajectory as a colonized entity, the region itself is administered in division of six provinces, Central Papua (*Papua Tengah*), Highland Papua (*Papua Pegunungan*), Papua (*Papua*), South Papua (*Papua Selatan*), Southwest Papua (*Papua Barat Daya*), and West Papua (*Papua Barat*). Meanwhile, in the context of selfdetermination movement among the indigenous Papuans, the whole region referred to itself as *West Papua*, encompassing a far larger area than its contemporary by the Indonesian state administration; an adoption of a political stance that considers Papua as a colonized region. As such the research delves into the implementation and effectiveness of such circumstances through scrutinizing the roles of political institutions in the region stemming from the special autonomy status, and also assessed the implications and outcomes from such practices on the Papuan people selfdetermination, indigenous representation, and political agency. In doing so, this research explores the tensions between the pursuit of autonomy and the lingering legacy of colonialism, shedding light on the complexities of political dynamics and power relations. Methodically speaking, this paper utilizes literary review with historical and critical methods to assert the arguments presented in the findings. Concluding this paper, it can be argued that the Special Autonomy Status granted by the State of Indonesia in its practice through the political institutions derived from it is a social hegemony which dismisses and discredited the subordinated groups and the selfdetermination aspiration both in the political society and civic society in the region. Additionally, the coercion and ideological domination committed by these same institutions discriminate and hold back the political agency of the self-determination movement to reach further audiences amongst the indigenous populations. This paper suggests that there must be a change in strategy of the self-determination movement in such a situation in order to bring about higher consciousness of the circumstances faced by the subaltern Papuan indigenous people. Through the claim asserted in this research, the study aims to contribute to the discourse on decolonization, indigenous rights, and political autonomy in the context of Papua specifically – and the concept and practice of political autonomy in general, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities that shape regional political landscape.