

Where Is the Sultan of Aceh? Reconsidering the Return of the Aceh Sultanate

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Abstract : The Helsinki Agreement between the Indonesian Government (RI) and the Aceh Liberation Movement (GAM) on 15th Aug. 2005 fails to reconcile social and political turmoil in Aceh Darussalam (NAD). The political powers that were once unified in their struggle against Indonesian Government prior to this agreement have now become divided due to differences in political and economic interests. Using descriptive analysis and intellectual discourse, this paper proposes that the Aceh Sultanate be revived as an attempt to unite these divided political powers and to curtail potential conflicts in the area. This proposal is based on three assumptions. First, the Aceh Sultanate is the only Sultanate in Sumatera that did not fall victim to the social revolution post 1945 proclamation of independence. Second, the Acehnese still acknowledge the Sultanate as a sovereign political power even though it was defeated by the Dutch in 1904. Third, there are emotional, historical and cultural ties between the Acehnese and the Sultanate as they still perceived them to be their patron. Consequently, the Sultanate is the unifying element of all political powers in the area. This, however, is not an attempt to reinstate feudalism in Aceh. It only seeks to facilitate the political reconciliation process in Aceh Darussalam founded on sociological and historical background of locals.

Keywords : Sultanate Aceh, political reconciliation, political power, patron-client

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