

False descendants of the Pontianak Sultan: the practice and legal implications of genealogical fraud

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This study examines the practice of impersonating descendants of the Pontianak Sultan and its societal implications. Reports suggest that such practices are widespread and increasingly common. Using a qualitative narrative approach, this research provides a comprehensive analysis of lineage falsification. Data were collected through interviews, group discussions, and document reviews; and analysed within the framework of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). This study reveals that lineage falsification involves fabricating names or associating unrelated family lineages with the Pontianak Sultan. This fraudulent practice is driven by the growing authority and influence of the Sultanate, with individuals seeking to gain social or economic advantages. Fabricating lineage is not merely a social phenomenon but also carries significant legal consequences. Fraudulent claims are frequently used to unlawfully manipulate land ownership within the former Sultanate's territories and, in some cases, involve issues related to Islamic family law. This study underscores the prevalence of lineage falsification as a pervasive societal issue and highlights the urgent need for further research on royal lineage disputes, given the complexities of verifying authenticity. Addressing this issue is essential, as the proliferation of fake lineages undermines cultural heritage, legal systems, and societal trust.

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkap praktik pemalsuan nasab sebagai keturunan Sultan Pontianak serta implikasi sosialnya. Laporan menunjukkan bahwa praktik semacam ini sering terjadi dan semakin meluas. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan naratif kualitatif, penelitian ini memberikan analisis komprehensif mengenai fenomena pemalsuan nasab. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, diskusi kelompok, dan telaah dokumen, kemudian dianalisis dalam kerangka fikih (hukum Islam). Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemalsuan nasab dilakukan dengan menciptakan nama-nama fiktif dalam garis keturunan agar terhubung dengan Sultan Pontianak atau dengan mengaitkan nasab keluarga yang tidak terkait kepada sultan. Praktik ini didorong oleh meningkatnya otoritas dan pengaruh Kesultanan, sehingga individu berupaya memperoleh keuntungan sosial atau ekonomi. Pemalsuan nasab ini bukan hanya fenomena sosial tetapi juga memiliki konsekuensi hukum yang signifikan. Klaim nasab palsu sering digunakan untuk memanipulasi kepemilikan tanah secara tidak sah di wilayah bekas Kesultanan dan, dalam beberapa kasus, melibatkan isu-isu terkait hukum keluarga Islam. Penelitian ini menyoroti prevalensi pemalsuan nasab sebagai masalah sosial yang meluas dan menekankan pentingnya penelitian lebih lanjut tentang perselisihan garis keturunan kerajaan, mengingat kompleksitas dalam memverifikasi keasliannya. Mengatasi masalah ini sangat penting karena maraknya garis keturunan palsu dapat merusak warisan budaya, sistem hukum, dan kepercayaan masyarakat.

Keywords: *genealogical fraud; legal implications; Sultan's descendants; Pontianak Sultan.*

Introduction

The lineage of the Pontianak Sultan is believed to be well-documented among the people of Pontianak (ADM, 2021). Lineage preservation is also seen among the descendants of many other kings. It is well depicted in Enthoven's book on West Kalimantan, where he records the lineage of kings, families, descendants, their social status, and their rights

as citizens of that region (Enthoven, 1905). The present descendants of the Pontianak Sultan still practice this tradition both in the form of an oral tradition and in the form of documented family history (TR, 2021). The preservation of these lineages is intricately linked to safeguarding the rights of the descendants of kings and sultans, as in the case of using royal titles (AL, 2021). The same occurs among the descendants of the kings of Morocco and Jordan. They perform the task of data gathering and validation of ancestry (Catherine, 2023). Hence, the royal family in West Kalimantan is sometimes provided with a title as a status marker in society (Enthoven, 1905). In Sambas, the sultan's descendants are recorded by listing their titles according to their ancestry (Hollander, 1871). In this context, genealogy carries legal value, as its existence serves as legal evidence for individuals to establish and be acknowledged as descendants of past rulers (ADM, 2021).

In Pontianak, the prominence of lineage seems to have drawn the attention of a small segment of the community who were not direct descendants of the sultan. It is evidenced by instances of falsifying lineage (MR, 2021). Individuals have frequently surfaced within society, making false claims of descent from the Pontianak sultans. This practice, however, gives rise to legal complications within society, particularly in the context of family relations that should not exist (ADM, 2021). Similar incidents have been reported in various regions. Nevertheless, these incidents tend to be region-specific and not recurring. Fake lineages often surface in connection with other legal issues, such as the case of Toto Santoso of the Keraton Agung Sejagat. In this instance, his false lineage was exposed in court, where he claimed to be a descendant of the Mataram sultan (*Pengadilan Negeri Purworejo*, 2020). In contrast, those who falsely claim descent from Sultan Abdurrahman have yet to face legal consequences (AL, 2021). It appears that the practice of fabricating lineages is not widespread, except when there is a motive against the law, as illustrated by the case of Toto Santoso in Purworejo. It is worth noting that this case is not an isolated incident.

Research on lineage issues is not a new theme in studying Islamic law. However, genealogical fraud remains a relatively unexplored topic. In general, previous research has been associated with the issue of child lineage. For example, Edyar (2016) investigated the situation of children born out of marriage after the Constitutional Court's decision on the Marriage Law and its impact on the judicial review of child lineage. Another related case

is when a child is born out of wedlock (Jarir et al., 2023; Ali et al. 2024). Amruzi (2017) discussed about illegitimate children and compared them with children born out of adultery. Both studies also mentioned the legal aspects, including children's rights and inheritance. However, the lineage of children in relation to their parents is due to extramarital affairs or marriages that are not legally recognised, as explained by Fathullah (2022). Furthermore, Kudrat (2016) investigated the civil issues between such children and their biological parents. It is, however, clear that lineage is crucial for children (Jamil, 2016). Lineage is also connected with the problem of *kafā'ah* (equality or compatibility) in marriage. Saiin (2015) elaborated on *kafā'ah* in relation to lineage in the context of husband and wife. The studies highlight concerns related to lineage that have been previously addressed. However, it is worth noting that genealogical fraud, as discussed in this article, appears to have received limited attention from researchers. Interestingly, as explored in the literature above, lineage is primarily related to legal matters.

The issue of falsification of lineages is not only a subject of research in the Muslim community; it is also investigated in American literature. In this area, one can mention Gustave Anjou, a Swede who pretended to be French to become an American citizen (Remington, 1992). Anjou provided Americans with the fake royal European lineage they wanted to have. This issue has caught the attention of the National Genealogical Society (NGS) in the United States. Family Search (2023), an institution specialising in genealogy, has documented several creators of fraudulent lineages, including Anjou, and has highlighted earlier studies that uncovered their methods. Such falsifications create confusion in the history of families, as seen in Jacques' (2023) research on the Peshall family in England. His research proved that fake genealogies are legal, particularly in matters related to inheritance. Other reasons that led to the establishment of Digging History magazine include faking lineages and other issues that are associated with noble lineage and issues related to The Horn Papers (Hall, 2019). These concerns are not limited to the Muslim communities but are also present in society and the law.

The falsification of lineages, as mentioned above, has sparked the need for research to generate academic insights into the issue. The research focuses on two main questions: how are lineages falsified, and what are the legal implications for society? The first question aims

to uncover the methods used to falsify lineages in Pontianak, classifying and detailing these practices. The second question examines the consequences faced by those who engage in lineage falsification, particularly in terms of their new legal status as descendants of the sultan. Additionally, this study seeks to provide context for the occurrence of lineage falsification, helping to deepen the understanding of this phenomenon. This research offers fresh knowledge, as discussions on the falsification of sultan descendants' lineages in Indonesia and its legal impact remain limited. Previous studies have primarily examined lineage within the scope of family law; however, lineage also intersects with traditional values, especially concerning the sultan's descendants, which makes the research particularly valuable.

Method

A qualitative research method with a narrative approach was employed in this research (Cresswell, 2007). This method may create a comprehensive understanding of the systematic falsification of lineage as it occurred in Pontianak society, facilitating the formulation of academic knowledge (Raco, 2010). The primary data sources are documents, including written records. Supplementary information explains and interprets the document findings (Taylor, 2016). Data collection involved structured and unstructured interviews conducted in dynamic settings (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2018). Interviews were conducted with lineage recorders, lineage experts, and descendants of sultans—individuals frequently involved in addressing lineage falsification issues in Pontianak. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, all key informants were anonymised.

Additionally, data from written works were gathered through document search methods. These documents are typically preserved by individuals dedicating to lineage matters. The document search approach ensures the collection of authentic and credible information regarding lineage forgery. In some cases, informants were not only interviewed but also invited to participate in group discussions to further enrich the interpretation of the data, given the confidential nature of lineage falsification. All data were verified with relevant parties to assess their accuracy. The results were then systematically presented in written form. Simultaneously, a review of *Shāfi'ī fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) literature was

undertaken to establish a legal framework for analysing the issue of lineage falsification. This literature review involved examining journals, books, and other relevant sources of information (Zed, 2014). The Shāfiʿī school of thought was chosen for its alignment with the *fiqh* practices of the majority of Muslims in Indonesia (Hakim et al., 2023, p. 236), including those in Pontianak. The findings were compared with the research problem as observed in society, leading to a comprehensive explanation (Raco, 2010). The *fiqh* literature was used to reveal its legal implications. The theoretical framework of *fiqh* was also applied to reveal the consequences of falsifying lineage.

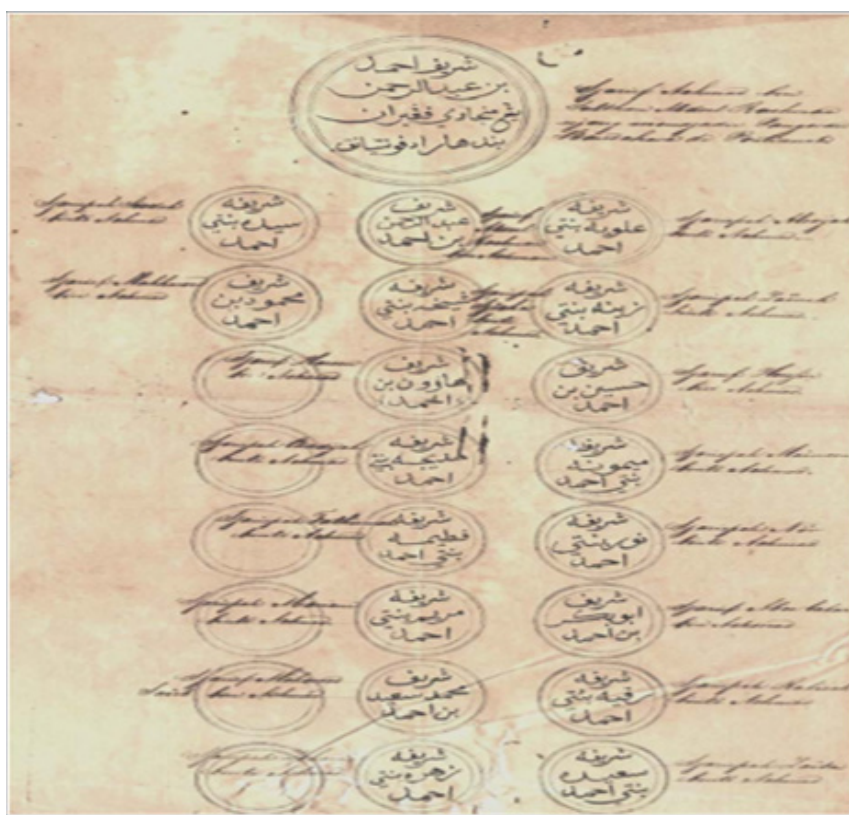
Preservation of lineage among the descendants of the Pontianak Sultan

In society, the descendants of the Pontianak Sultan have a well-defined lineage identity, forming a sizable family. Their genealogy serves as the basis for family structures, with Sultan Abdurrahman often regarded as their patriarch and commonly referred to as “*syarif*” (MR, 2021). Various Indigenous people in West Kalimantan share this royal descendant title, including the “*uray*” and “*mas*” in the Sambas kingdom. These titles are accompanied by specific attire traditionally associated with the kingdom (Hasanuddin, 2014), emphasising their connection to the sultan’s lineage. The genealogical system among the descendants of the Pontianak sultan is developed under Islamic legal norms to ensure the preservation of their lineage and prevent potential issues such as adultery, prostitution, and incest (MR, 2021). Azizi (2020) explains that the wisdom behind *fiqh* norms lies in safeguarding society from social harm. The formation of a large extended family described here is not a new phenomenon. Raja Ali Haji, when writing the genealogy of Bugis and Malay kings, already knew this. For this purpose, lineage recording was necessary, including the descendants of the Pontianak Sultan (Overbeck, 1926).

In this research, “lineage” is interpreted as the blood relations between an individual, Sultan Abdurrahman, and his extended family. It encompasses the relationship between a child and their biological father and male ancestors (Sya`rāwi, 1991). Within this context, lineage serves as the foundation of family relationships, forming the basis for creating family groups (Al-Zuhāilī, 1984). The tradition of documenting lineage dates to the early days of the sultanate. Sultan Abdurrahman and his successors maintained lineage records

(Abdurrahman, 1981), sometimes presented as works of art. Sultan Usman, in particular, was dedicated to preserving his family's lineage and even authored a book documenting the descendants of Sultan Abdurrahman, both upward and downward (Bujang, 1969). Several sultanate officials, like Prince Bendahara Ahmad, also followed this practice, diligently recording their ancestors' names and their descendants.

Figure 1
Family Tree of Pangeran Bendahara Pontianak,
Syarif Ahmad ibn Sultan Abdurrahman



Source: National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia

This tradition extended beyond the sultan's palace and became a common practice among many families. Such a situation is generally common. Lineage often fosters awareness

as a community. It is demonstrated in Leroux's (2015) research on the French Canadian community in Quebec, which is built on genealogical and historical commonalities. They form their own emotional consciousness, similar to the descendants of the Pontianak Sultan. They documented their genealogy, creating a list of key figures in their lineage, which served as the reference for tracing their descent. These figures are categorised into three groups: children descended from the sultan, princes, and commoners (AL, 2021). Searching for the sultan's lineage is relatively straightforward, while tracing the lineage of commoners is more challenging, requiring detailed information. These written records were passed down to succeeding generations. Additionally, the lineage was sometimes preserved through oral tradition, with some families having members who memorised the names in their lineage. This tradition raised individuals recognised as genealogists (AW, 2021). These genealogists serve as valuable references not only for their own extended families but also for others.

This is quite reasonable because the sultan's descendants have extended to many areas. Some of them occasionally forget their family tree or ancestry (TR, 2021). This context makes Pontianak important as it becomes a place that people seek in their search for identity. It is in line with Urrestarazu-Capell (2022), who states that the desire to know one's ancestry has led to genealogical tourism. They turn their family's place of origin into a travel destination that offers family details. In this regard, the lineage in Pontianak has pertinent functions, assuming the position of suppliers of the desired information. They also perform searches to update new names in each family. They organise their findings as documented records (TR, 2021). Many others within these families follow similar practices. Some documents have been transcribed into books using specific techniques to enhance readability, while others take the form of family trees. These various forms of documentation reinforce and complement each other, ensuring the preservation of family lineage and history (ADM, 2021).

This tradition has led to a consensus that an individual's recognition as a descendant of the sultan represents acceptance by their extended family, affirming their place without denial. This consensus is widely upheld in Pontianak and the surrounding regions. In jurisprudence, such recognition of lineage fame can be akin to testimony (Al-Asqālānī,

1981). However, this recognition is limited to this specific region and may not apply elsewhere. It serves as a cultural provision for acknowledging one's status and heritage, offering a method for recognising a person's lineage connection to their family and ancestors (Al-'Aṭās, 1900). Nevertheless, this consensus does not provide detailed information about the lineage chain, which relies on written records for connections to fathers, grandfathers, the sultan, and relatives. Thus, it is crucial to maintain harmony between recognition and these records to ensure the accuracy of one's lineage and prevent misrepresentation of ancestors. Consequently, record sheets must be protected from damage and potential crime activities (TR, 2021).

Genealogical fraud

False claims of being Sultan Abdurrahman's descendants have repeatedly been made in Pontianak. This is evident from several individuals who have been reported to have engaged in fabricating and falsifying lineage. They intentionally create incorrect genealogies to assert their false claims of being legitimate descendants. In addition, some disseminate false information, claiming their descent from the sultan. There are underlying interests driving these actions, which can be determined from the roles of those involved in making these claims. Furthermore, it appears that individuals fabricating lineages employ various methods. this study delves into two examples of falsification, which serve as representative cases of this research.

Table 1

Cases Involving Individuals Who Falsely Claim a Lineage to the Pontianak Sultan.

No.	Name	Age	Occupation	Year	Remark
1	AS	35 y.o.	Religious organisation activist	2019	Gaining historical and cultural legitimacy for social and religious roles in society.
2	AI	32 y.o.	<i>Ustadz</i> [Islamic religious teacher/scholar]	2019	Gaining historical and cultural legitimacy for the role of religion in society.
3	IN	45 y.o.	Religious organisation activist	2020	Gaining historical and cultural legitimacy to play a socio-religious role in society.

As an example, consider the lineage of Iskandar ibn Abdullah. His genealogy is composed of a series of names, tracing back through generations: Iskandar ibn Abdullah ibn Ahmad ibn Jakfar ibn Hasan ibn Abu Bakar ibn Ali ibn Husein ibn Umar ibn Usman ibn Hamzah ibn Muhammad ibn Hasyim ibn Shafi'i ibn Hanafi ibn Abdullah ibn Abdul Hamid ibn Sultan Abdurrahman. AL (2021) states that Iskandar is an outsider, and his family has no known ties to the sultan's lineage. Iskandar's genealogy is presented on a single sheet of white paper with typed text. In that document, he claims to be a descendant of the sultan, asserting his lineage based on a record created by Ismail in Pontianak on March 5, 1951. Notably, there are no witnesses' signatures or any endorsement from the responsible individual. Essentially, Iskandar provides this lineage information, as he claims to have a connection to the sultan. At the bottom of the genealogy sheet, there is a photograph of Iskandar. This lineage claim was disseminated to numerous people, ultimately becoming widely known throughout the community. Consequently, Iskandar's claim was known to several families of the sultan's descendants. AL (2021) informs him that the sultan's family did not acknowledge his presence in society.

The fraudulent lineage above, according to TR (2021), is evident due to two unfulfilled conditions. First, Iskandar lacks any recognition as a descendant of the sultan, primarily because his claim was not accepted and his existence seemed to emerge suddenly. At the same time, he did not present any witnesses, while such witnesses are required to prove the lineage claimed by a child (Taufiki, 2012). Second, the names in his lineage do not correspond to the established genealogical records, further substantiating the dismissal of Iskandar's lineage. It is strongly suspected that he manipulated his personal data. In addition, the genealogical structure is questionable. The composition of the names in his lineage spans 18 generations from him to Sultan Abdurrahman. This generational composition suggests an estimated time span of 450 years, while the lineage was created in 1951 and is only 143 years old. According to information from TR (2021), traditionally, by 1951, Sultan Abdurrahman's descendants had only extended to the sixth generation.

According to *fiqh*, an individual may establish their lineage through a vow or assertion. Iskandar's lineage is a documented form of acknowledgement with procedures recognised in jurisprudence, serving as a legal basis (Ibn Rusyd, 2012). However, jurisprudence

specifies certain material conditions for such a claim, including the logicality of the content and the absence of denial (Al-Zuhailī, 1984). In Iskandar's case, he failed to meet both conditions. His lineage lacks logical consistency in terms of generational composition and lifetime. Furthermore, his claim was refuted by the sultan's family, with no one accepting it. Consequently, the conditions for establishing the truth of the lineage in *fiqh* cannot be met. Iskandar lacked the evidence needed to substantiate his claims, as proof is mandatory for those making such assertions (Yusuf, 2009).

The case of fraudulent lineage adopts the terminology from Article 263 of the Criminal Code (KUHP), which falls under the category of creating a forged document (Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana, 2021). Iskandar's asserted lineage lacks an authentic origin. The names within his genealogy are typically found in families of royal descent, except for the names "Shafi'i" and "Hanafi". However, this lineage never had any historical basis. In document studies, certificates of royal lineage have been documented in Pontianak since the 1980s. It was substantiated by discovering a birth certificate belonging to Ismail ibn Idrus, a descendant of the King of Kubu. The certificate was issued by Yusuf bin Husin (JI, 2021). The revelation of the Kubu document led to suspicions of Iskandar's lineage being a case of plagiarism. Incidents involving the creation of fraudulent lineages, like the Iskandar case, had been reported.

Another example is the genealogy of Muhammad ibn Husin. During their private group discussions, ADM (2021) and several descendants of the Pontianak Sultan concluded that Muhammad's lineage was fabricated by individuals who asserted they were his descendants. They established a lineage that does not follow a single-name arrangement but rather branches out into a large family network. This lineage model resembles the genealogies of kings or sultans often documented in Dutch colonial books. These records typically include sultans, their immediate families, and grandchildren, most of whom belong to well-known families (Enthoven, 1905). In this case, Muhammad was documented as having brothers named Umar and Ali, who were connected to the sultan. It was reported that Muhammad's birth document was discovered in Kubu Raya in the form of handwritten sheets of paper, which contained names and a date of writing. The document asserts that the three individuals have descendants. Muhammad had four children, Ali had four, and

Umar had one. As stated by ADM (2021), his fabricated lineage was created to establish an extended family in order to persuade the public. This approach contrasts with the method employed by Iskandar in his own falsification of lineage.

The fraudulent lineage above is evident due to two unfulfilled conditions. First, there is no historical record or acknowledgement of descendants of Muhammad or his extended family among the sultan's descendants. By consensus, they have never been recognised as descendants of the sultan. Other families descended from the sultan considered them outsiders, raising doubts about their claims from a jurisprudential standpoint (Al-'Aṭās, 1900). Second, the name "Muhammad," suggested as Husin's son, lacks a logical basis. In accordance with *fiqh* provisions, acceptance based on reason is a prerequisite for recognition (Al-Zuḥailī, 1984). However, this lineage claim was refuted. The names of Muhammad and his two brothers, who were asserted to be Husin's biological children, were not found in genealogical records, further undermining the credibility of this lineage.

Husin's identity has been confirmed as the son of the sultan, with evidence indicating that he has one biological son rather than three, and that none of these individuals bear the names Muhammad, Umar, or Ali (ADM, 2021). As a result, this lineage is unequivocally rejected as false. In response to the rejection, the fraudster attempted to substantiate their claim of lineage, which is their obligation. The confirmation of lineage based on *fiqh* evidence can be justifiable (Al-Zuḥailī, 1984; Hanapi et al., 2022). To this end, they presented evidence in the form of a tomb bearing the name Muhammad, located within the sultan's family burial complex. However, this evidence was refuted because the tomb was based on data and witness statements that were widely regarded as fabricated or fraudulent.

The case of fraudulent lineage draws upon terminology from the Criminal Code, referred to as an act of falsification (Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana, 2021; Ariyanti & Supani, 2024). There is an original lineage in this instance, but certain details have been altered. The forger fabricated lineage to the sultan, with the name Husin being authentic. As reported by HD (2021), the forgery involved the inclusion of three children's names that were falsely associated with the name Husin. Furthermore, it extended to graves used as evidence, confirmed by the discovery of a fake tomb bearing the name Muhammad, which had been recently restored atop someone else's grave (Statement Letter made by

the Chairman of the Pontianak Sultanate Tomb Endowment regarding the Tomb of Muhammad). This fake tomb, according to the UN (2021), was created by altering the structure and identity of an existing tomb that previously belonged to an individual who had no heirs.

The practice of falsifying lineages, as described in the case of FZ, was discovered during a document search. FZ, known for his religious knowledge, hosts a *dhiker* (ritual prayer for glorifying God) assembly in Pontianak. Several local Muslims have become his *dhiker* congregants or students (MR, 2021). FZ fabricated his lineage, falsely claiming to be a descendant of the king of Kubu. This fraudulent lineage was constructed by adding made-up names, starting from his supposed ancestors and connecting them to the king, who had no descendants. FZ's fabricated lineage was documented on an old piece of paper, which he claimed to be a legacy from his parents. The case of FZ's fraudulent lineage was ultimately exposed by the descendants of the king of Kubu, leading to the revelation of his deception (RA, 2021). This revelation is further substantiated by FZ's family's denial of his claim.

The practice of falsifying lineages occurred amid the strengthening of the sultanate's role, represented by Sultan Mahmud Melvin. As the sultan of Pontianak, Mahmud Melvin plays various roles in society, encompassing not only cultural but also social, political, and security functions. It is evident in the sultan's media appearances addressing current issues, such as his statement of responsibility at the West Kalimantan Regional Police following the riots on May 22, 2019 (Angah, 2019). This statement effectively promoted peace in Pontianak City, leading to the release of dozens of individuals suspected of involvement in the riots. In this context, Prabandani (2011) emphasises the significant role of local wisdom in addressing societal issues. Furthermore, every month, the sultan's palace serves as the venue for a gathering attended by officials from the Pontianak Regional Leadership Communication Forum to discuss the city's challenges and future (Jim, 2019). Previously, grand celebrations of sultanate activities were held on a large scale, attracting regional officials and politicians, including the mayor, governor, and even presidential candidates (Mansur, 2019), as seen in events like the Grand Pilgrimage and the Death Anniversary of Sultan Abdurrahman (Syahrani, 2018). Within this societal context, the practice of

falsifying lineages becomes apparent.

The role of the sultan mentioned above has contributed to the resurgence of local nobility within his extended family. This resurgence is evident through the conferring of noble titles upon relatives, a tradition that had waned during the New Order era. Currently, efforts are underway to revive this tradition. The bestowing of noble titles can shape the character of individuals, and many members of society have also received these titles (Andilala, 2021). There has been an increase in the quality of accolades presented by the public to the sultan's relatives. In addition, places of historical significance connected to the sultanate have been recognised and honoured (Peraturan Daerah Provinsi Kalimantan Barat No. 6 Tahun 2019). The resurgence of sultanate events, such as the Grand Pilgrimage and the Death Anniversary of former sultans, has accompanied it. During these events, Islamic scholars from among the sultan's relatives have played prominent roles. Similar developments are observed beyond the sultanate, exemplified by the involvement of Prince Seri Negara, who actively engages in social and community roles (Sani, 2023).

This growing appreciation for local nobility appears to have inspired individuals like Iskandar and Muhammad's family to claim descent from the sultan and engage in the falsification of their lineage. A similar phenomenon occurred in Baza, Spain, where Jews in the city fabricated false genealogies after converting to Christianity in order to attain local noble status (Rios, 2022). By establishing these new genealogies, they were able to gain legitimacy in their societal roles. It is important to note that these individuals are recognised as figures and activists of religious community organisations within their community. In addition to Iskandar and Muhammad, in 2019, AS and AI made claims about their relations with Sultan Abdurrahman. They sought nobility to elevate their social status, in addition to their roles as religious mass organisation activists. This aligns with Zoltá's (2002) findings in his study, as lineage was seen to have a connection with symbols of power and prestige. The invented association with the sultanate is intended to draw attention to the important position of a particular person in society.

This practice is reminiscent of the case of Taat Pribadi Dimas Kanjeng in Probolinggo, who exploited his noble title (*Pengadilan Negeri Probolinggo*, 2018) by adopting the *Sri Raja Prabu Rajasa Nagara* style, coinciding with the rise of royal and sultanate organisations

across the archipelago. His wife and several followers were also granted noble titles to establish legitimacy for their societal roles (Dardias, 2016). Similarly, lineage fraudsters in Pontianak appear to be engaging in a similar endeavour, exploiting the public's reverence for the sultan's descendants to legitimise their professions, historically and culturally. This situation also reminds us of the case of Keraton Agung Sejagat. Toto Santoso fabricated a lineage tracing back to the king of Mataram to garner recognition and support within his community. Iskandar and others appear to be following a similar path, seeking to gain authority from the nobility of the Pontianak sultanate for the advancement of their occupations.

Legal implications for genealogical fraud

Genealogical fraud, in fact, carries significant legal implications. It is primarily due to the fact that lineage plays a crucial role in the legality of relations within a family (Maulana et al., 2024; Idris et al., 2024), particularly concerning the biological father, grandfather, and all their descendants, which hold importance in the context of religion (Sakirman, 2015). A fraudulent genealogy can place the perpetrator in a legal family relation with other descendants of the sultans. In pre-Islamic times, adopted children could traditionally be recognised by their foster fathers (Aslati et al., 2024), creating legal implications for inheritance laws (Hasan, 2023; Hakim & Nasution, 2023), including the concept of *mahram* (a family member that is forbidden to marry) (Madrah et al., 2022). However, this practice was altered by Islam (Al-Baghawi, 1989), which mandates that a child must be attributed to their biological father, leading to further legal implications. This matter is elaborated in Surah al-Ahzab, verses 4 and 5, which pertain to the story of the Prophet and his adopted son, Zaid ibn Harisah. During that period, Zaid was assigned to the Prophet but soon received a prohibition from the Quran (Al-Ṭabarī, 1994). This ruling emphasises that the concept of lineage is legally regulated because it has broad implications, particularly within the context of Islamic law and family relations (Fathullah & Abduh, 2022).

The existence of a lineage has legal implications, particularly concerning inheritance and marriage (Al-Zuhailī, 1984; Azwar et al., 2024). These legal issues emerged because of lineage. Lineage relations can give rise to a variety of legal issues. These are implicitly

addressed in the Compilation of Islamic Law, particularly in chapters concerning the prohibition of marriage, maintenance, guardianship, and inheritance laws (Sallom & Syu'aib, 2022; Yuniar & Sudarmaji, 2023; Azni et al., 2023; Fachrunisa et al., 2023; Suharsono et al., 2024; Syukrawati et al., 2024). Falsifying one's lineage can result in individuals gaining a legal status that is not rightfully theirs, potentially impacting issues like marriage, care, inheritance, and other legal matters (Ilmi, 2015; Falah et al., 2023; Retnowulandari et al., 2024). The provision of this prohibition is found in the hadith of the Prophet as narrated by al-Bukhāri (2006): "*And whoever claims to be a member of a people, but has no blood relations with them, shall prepare a seat for himself in hell.*" Inheritance issues often arise as a significant legal implication of the practice of falsifying one's lineage to claim descent from kings and sultans. It is recognised because, according to Mujib, lineage is one of the fundamental pillars of inheritance law (Mujib, 2010). The other two pillars are the deceased individual and the assets they leave behind. It is unsurprising, given that former rulers and their relatives typically possessed considerable wealth.

The aforementioned case highlights the struggle for land control in the heart of the Surakarta palace (Anggarawati, 2019). As a result, preserving lineage among the descendants of kings and sultans is traditionally important for maintaining the legal connection between these descendants and their biological ancestors, who were rulers. This practice plays a crucial role in safeguarding their inheritance rights. This legal connection serves as a foundational basis for inheritance (Ḥafīz, 2012). Therefore, it is essential to uphold their lineage. This legal issue led Suwarsi in Yogyakarta to face court as a defendant in a lineage falsification case. Suwarsi's claim to be a descendant of King Pakubuwono X of the Kasunanan Surakarta arose in the context of inheritance disputes related to the former king (*Pengadilan Negeri Tinggi Yogyakarta*, 2019). A similar situation occurred in Bima, where Saiful Bahri claimed lineage from King Abdullah bin Sultan Ibrahim to secure inheritance. However, his claim was rejected by the court as false (*Pengadilan Negeri Bima*, 2017). Ultimately, false claims will be revealed as untrue before the descendants of the king and the experts involved in these matters.

As RA (2021) notes, falsifying lineages to claim an inheritance from the sultan's heirloom property is challenging, as these claimants must contend with the actual heirs. Reports

indicate that the family of the previous sultan still possesses a significant amount of heirloom property. Islamic law guarantees the right of inheritance even if they are distant descendants (Djawas et al., 2022). This is evidenced by requests from the sultan's relatives to the Pontianak Religious Court for the identification of heirs to ancestral heirloom property that has remained in Mecca since 1908 (*Pengadilan Agama Pontianak*, 2020). In 1934, descendants of one of Sultan Yusuf's children sought a legal determination of heirs regarding the inheritance left by their ancestors in Pontianak (*Pengadilan Agama Pontianak*, 2013). Such cases are still prevalent in society today. One notable instance involves land utilized by Angkasa Pura II for the Soepadio Kubu Raya Airport, which is claimed by the descendants of the Sultan of Pontianak (Amin, 2002). They invoked their connection to the Pontianak Sultanate to assert their inheritance rights. RA (2021) notes that this type of inheritance typically does not attract those who falsify lineages.

They can claim ownership of the sultanate's inherited lands through a fraudulent inheritance method based on their false lineage. RA (2021) stated:

“Historically, the Pontianak Sultanate encompassed a vast area, and even now, many lands within it remain uncertified as private property. In the past, the sultan had the authority to allocate land to anyone he chose for use as gardens, rice fields, or other types of cultivation. Such land was typically located on the peripheries of the kingdom.”

The falsification of lineage claiming descent from the Sultan of Pontianak has persisted in the quest to acquire land historically associated with the sultanate. HD (2021) states, “*They created false lineages and then referenced the graves of individuals from these fabricated lineages, along with their invented histories, as false evidence. These graves were subsequently presented as proof of land ownership, allowing them to claim inheritance.*” This occurred in areas outside the city that were once governed by the sultanate. The claim will cause problems because the distribution of inheritance is clear. It is likely to happen because the knowledge of inheritance has received attention from local scholars in the past (Hakim, 2023). However, HD (2021) noted that this effort has never been reported as successful, primarily due to challenges posed by government legal regulations.

The falsification of the lineage of the Pontianak sultan has specific legal consequences for the family marriage institution. Within this institution, the principle of equality, or

kafā'ah, serves as a prerequisite for marriage (Sofiana et al., 2024). This principle governs women's rights to choose their partners based on equal lineage (Fadil et al., 2024). In the past, traditional scholars have stressed the principle of *kafā'ah* in marriage, and including Kiai Saleh Darat who stated it is better than the ownership of wealth (Irfan & Amri, 2020). This norm has existed for centuries among the royal families of West Kalimantan. In his written works, the Mufti of the Kubu Kingdom, Ismail Mundu, also acknowledged the principle of *kafā'ah*. Historically, the royal families of Matan, Sambas, Mempawah, Pontianak, and Kubu were interconnected through marriage ties, leading to established kinship (Kratz, 1980; Herlambang et al., 2024, pp. 225–229). They are documented to have had similar relationships with the kingdoms of Sanggau, Brunei Darussalam, Banjarmasin, and Palembang (Subrata, 1998; Alfarisi et al., 2023; Sukarni & Mahmud, 2024). The principle of *kafā'ah* continues to be upheld among the descendants of the Pontianak sultan, who are considered part of the family law tradition. Ultimately, the forger of the lineage managed to gain the status of *kafā'ah* within the marriage institution of the sultan's descendants.

The investigation into the false lineage has legal implications in Pontianak. In a discussion with MR (2021), FZ claims he had entered into an informal marriage with a descendant of the Sultan of Pontianak. This informal marriage refers to a union that adheres to *fiqh* but has not been officially registered with the Local Religious Affairs Office (KUA) (Baihaqi et al., 2024). FZ was previously known as a teacher leading a *dhikir* assembly, where he gathered a following. He utilized his fabricated lineage to garner support from the Muslim community related to his profession and was regarded as a royal descendant. This false lineage facilitated his marriage to a descendant of the Sultan of Pontianak, as the *kafā'ah* norm was met. Subarman's analysis indicated that this type of marriage was motivated by lust (Subarman, 2013). It was later disclosed that the marriage ended in divorce, though the specific reasons remain unknown. Saiin (2015) argues that *kafā'ah* is relevant to marital harmony, but the key point is religious equality. According to MR (2021), the marriage was not FZ's intended goal when he fabricated his lineage; however, the marriage still holds legal ramifications linked to the false lineage.

Conclusion

In practice, the falsification of the lineage of Pontianak Sultans can be categorised into two methods. The first involves creating false lineages using documents and information from various sources, which presenting inaccuracies that are easy to detect. This typically includes listing names in a linear fashion, such as children, fathers, and grandfathers. The second method is more systematic, crafting a fake lineage to resemble a cohesive family group. This approach, supported by document analysis, raises strong suspicions of authenticity due to the numerous names included in the lineage document, suggesting an absence of forgery. The rise in lineage forgery coincided with a resurgence of interest in Pontianak Sultanate culture, reflected in its influence on society and local governance. This environment heightened public respect for the sultanate family, which has historically contributed to the city's growth. Consequently, some individuals sought to attain this respect for personal benefit by fabricating lineages or altering existing ones, claiming to be the sultan's descendants.

The falsification of lineage has legal consequences for the extended family of the descendants of the Sultan of Pontianak. They attempt to leverage their fabricated lineage to claim former sultanate land on the outskirts of Pontianak. Although their efforts are ongoing, they have not yielded any results. In this pursuit, they disregard the inheritance rights of the original descendants of the Sultan of Pontianak, whose control over the land is contested. Furthermore, this false lineage affects the *kafā'ah* law related to marriage within the Sultan's family. Traditionally, women who are descendants of the Sultan of Pontianak adhere to the *kafā'ah* principle. Those who forge their lineage can exploit this tradition, allowing them to marry the Sultan's descendants. This practice does occur.

The investigation of fake royal lineage and its use in the research is a relevant area of discussion beyond Pontianak. This issue has social and legal implications, contributing to the literature on this topic and benefiting research. The study has revealed methods of falsifying lineage, which occur in various regions, including foreign countries. This research should interest communities in countries with a monarchy or where lineage is valued. However, gathering information presents challenges, as involves individual and confidential details. Research on lineage falsification will encounter difficulties, highlighting the importance of its findings in society.

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