

# Executive Summary

The dynamics of cultural policy is a matter as complex as culture itself. Culture develops based on interpretations of historical flows and the growth of norms that can be seen in local, national, and international contexts. In the international context, the policy of repatriating colonial collections between the Netherlands and Indonesia is currently in the spotlight. The repatriation policy is not based solely on returning objects but also on long-term cultural cooperation between the two countries.

Thus, this collaboration also demands higher responsibility. If both parties want to make repatriation policies and cultural cooperation a success, Jakarta and The Hague will need to communicate actively to build a better understanding of each other's perspectives and priorities. Not only that, this collaboration needs to balance the long-term vision of theoretical studies of colonial collection objects with the progress of practical implementation of repatriation policies.

Especially since 2020, significant progress has been made in building cultural cooperation on the repatriation of Dutch and Indonesian colonial collections. However, issues such as debates on certain objects, research into the history of origins, the complexity of the Dutch government's institutional landscape, or the trap of neo-colonialism are still challenges that can hinder the implementation of repatriation policies.

This policy paper analyzes the opportunities and challenges in this bilateral repatriation policy and presents six recommendations for Indonesia's strategy to foster sustainable cultural cooperation with the Netherlands:

- 1. Increase the inclusiveness of repatriation policies for people of origin to support co-creation in producing knowledge and deepening the meaning of socio-historical-religious-cultural values in colonial collection objects to streamline the repatriation process and long-term cultural cooperation.**
- 2. Support the joint establishment of the Expertise Center for Tracing Colonial Collections (*Expertisecentrum Herkomst Koloniale Objecten*) to ensure the development of expertise and production of knowledge exchanges on the provenance research between Indonesia and The Netherlands in a balanced and equal ground.**
- 3. Ensure that the basis for requests for the repatriation of colonial objects goes beyond national political interests, but as cultural heritage that has been taken from a long history of injustice which**

**has socio-historical-religious-cultural values that are inalienable and essential in interpreting the identity of the Indonesian people.**

- 4. Strengthen the soft instruments basis for repatriation as a human right in owning, accessing, or controlling cultural heritage with reference to the various evolving international norms as well as encourage a forum of understanding for countries from the global south or ex-colonies who have similar experiences to conduct an effective repatriation efforts and balance the Western Eurocentric epistemic domination.**
- 5. Ensure the relevance of the 1975 Joint Recommendation for the repatriation of objects that have significant cultural and historical value, in particular the Dutch obligation to provide assistance in searching for objects that are not owned by the state and in carrying out the provenance research the Java Man/Dubois collections, with joint experts from both countries.**
- 6. Explore the alternative resolution opportunities such as inclusion of heritage title, joint ownership, borrowing, formal recognition, making replicas, digital restitution, object exchange and so on as the alternative of repatriation dispute.**

In conclusion, navigating the intricacies of cultural policy, especially concerning the repatriation of colonial collections between the Netherlands and Indonesia, requires a delicate balance of historical understanding, mutual respect, and forward-thinking collaboration. The progress achieved since 2020 demonstrates a shared commitment to fostering cultural cooperation, yet challenges persist. To overcome these challenges and ensure a successful implementation of repatriation policies, active communication, balanced narratives, and inclusive strategies are imperative. By adhering to the recommendations outlined in this policy paper, Indonesia can pave the way for sustainable cultural cooperation with the Netherlands, rooted in mutual respect, equity, and the recognition of cultural heritage as a fundamental human right. Together, Jakarta and The Hague can forge a path forward that honors the complex history of colonialism while fostering a future of shared understanding and cooperation. Hence, it is highly true that navigating the path home is not merely returning the objects, but towards a new relational ethic.