

Hapahari and *Handep*: Cultural Aspects in Village Head Elections in Central Kalimantan

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Abstract

The article explores the candidate's practice in village head elections, such as vote-buying, brokerage networks, cultural aspects and other aspects. We argue that a candidate's victory is determined by the material aspect only, but there are other practices that candidates use as a form of minimizing the mobilization of material resources and even resistance. This research is a case study, bound by time and place, and is holistic. We collected data by relying on observation and interviews with many relevant informants in the Pilkades (village head elections) Tumbang Habaon, Central Kalimantan. Through this study, we found that every candidate has engaged in the practice of buying votes and appointing orang kepercayaan (right-hand man) to reach out to voters. However, the material resource practices we observe are not a determinant of a candidate's victory. We analyzed voters' views that they made their choice because of the candidates' past actions' concrete manifestations, which reflected the Dayak cultural values, namely *Hapahari* and *Handep*. In contrast to previous research, candidates believe more in material and spiritual aspects. We broaden his proposition that the candidate's cultural actions drive voter beliefs without resisting material resources' mobilization

Keywords:

Cultural Aspects; Village Head Election; *Hapahari*; *Handep*; Central Kalimantan

INTRODUCTION

The election of the village head or Pilkades is seen as a very complex local-level political dynamic (Kartodirdjo, 1992; Wasistiono, 1993). Before the reformation era, the concept of village power was still devolved, so that dependence on central policies was still high. After enacting village law number 6/2014, it opened the village decentralization tap that expanded towards village autonomy. Of the village head's power is becoming stronger and

more autonomous, then to increase a challenge to the contestation of power. Thus, there is a change in the image of power and contestation format at the village in Indonesia (Aspinall & Fealy, 2003; Schulte Nordholt & Van Klinken, 2007).

Our studies focused more on the dynamics of electoral contestation in Indonesia. In contemporary terms, scientific studies have mostly focused on legislative elections and regional head elections at the district and provincial levels. Their emphasis is on proving the material aspect's role in electoral influence, and at one point, they argue that the material aspect is the

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determinant of the candidate's victory. We argue that this assumption is not entirely correct.

We will present the other side of the candidate that the non-material (cultural) aspect simply makes the candidate closer to the voter and this is confirmed from our research cases.

Theoretically and empirically, the material aspect is related to the concept of material power, which is known as oligarchic resources (Winters, 2011; Hadiz & Robison, 2014; Ford & Pepinsky, 2014). According to them, political power is linear with material sources of ownership (money and capital). Anyone with large capital will be able to distribute materials to voters in election activities. Meanwhile, the form of the material aspect was expanded in the study Aspinall and Sukmajati (2015), where the material aspect is the candidate's empirical action in the election to grab voters' attention. They refer to it as cash, pork-barrel projects, programmatic assistance, gifts and direct aid distributed by the candidate's success team structure.

The non-material conception in electoral dynamics is interpreted as an antagonist of material actions, such as belief in spiritual or magical energy, sourced from communities' beliefs (myth) and social norms (Yuningsih & Subekti, 2016; Hidayat et al., 2018; Tawakkal et al., 2020; Tjahjoko, 2020).

Their study has contributed to building a framework for non-material aspects of elections, especially in the realm of village contestation.

Many election scholars are focused on the material aspects. However, this contribution is very valuable in explaining how the material aspects implicate candidates in the legislative and regional head elections, both at the district and provincial levels. They tested electoral problems, including clientelism and patronage variables, in the election and considered it a regression to electoral democracy in Indonesia (Aspinall, 2011; Aspinall, 2013; Allen, 2015; Abheseka, 2019; Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Paskarina et al., 2019). These studies, including material aspects, are only limited to discussing strategies, methods and mechanisms for winning candidates in reaching voters at the regional level. They only explore the views of candidates and voters regarding patterns of mobilizing material resources.

Apart from these limitations, the scientific literature related to Pilkades was developed following the way of thinking in regional elections while still aiming to determine the material aspects. During the campaign, the village head candidate distributed cash to voters, both during the calm period and right on election day (Halili, 2009; Aspinall & Rohman, 2017; Aspinall et al., 2017;

Kazali et al., 2020). Elsewhere, candidates were building a winning team's network (broker). Previous studies have shown that the broker and its structure effectively reach voters (Aspinall, 2014; Aspinall & As'ad, 2015; Ainillah, 2016; Tawakkal, 2017; Tawakkal et al., 2017; Pratiwi et al., 2020). The winning network structure is systematic and controlled from the top down to the voting. Such a winning network is maintained and maintained so that it is always loyal to the candidates.

Meanwhile, Tawakkal et al. (2020) criticize and see other aspects of the broker's motivation. They expand on the findings of Aspinall (2014) related to the type of broker in the contestation. Their research found that individuals' motivation to join campaign teams was not for material gain but was broader. There were no political transactions or agreements. They were only volunteers who were in solidarity with friends and organizations.

Vice versa, some scientists argue that a candidate's victory is not always symmetrical with the mobilization of money, material benefits from brokers and elite power, and economic resources. Hidayat et al. (2018) criticize previous researchers, such as Hadiz (2003); Robison and Hadiz (2004); Hadiz (2010); Winters (2011); Ford and Pepinsky (2014); and Ananta (2017),

which show oligarchy – aspects of elite power and economic capacity are the determinants of candidate wins. In his research at the Pilkades Tanjung, Kediri Regency, it was stated that the mobilization of material resources in the contest failed to win over the incumbent candidates. Their research found that candidates use nonmaterial sources of power, particularly those derived from Javanese spiritual power values.

According to Yuningsih and Subekti (2016), the decision of villagers to elect a particular candidate is influenced by the views of the village Kokolot (elders) and the belief that certain candidates have the charisma or *trah* (manifestation) to be a leader. The case of Pilkades Sriharjo, Bantul Regency (Tjahjoko, 2020) describes how female candidates' resistance to other candidates' strategies of doing money politics and using a shaman's role. Their study has materially differentiated characteristics and is categorized as an advanced village. They discussed the candidate's strategy to break other candidates' strategies.

We consider that the previous scientific literature related to Pilkades was more dominant in discussing candidate behavior in the election's momentum, not discussing much daily social behavior before becoming a candidate. We believe there is a relationship between the candidate's

past behavior and his election in the Pilkades contest. We consider past behavior as a cultural aspect that proves the candidate's closeness to society. Our study differs from previous studies in that the researchers confirmed more of the candidate's perspective, but we explored more of how the voter worldview. This study does not occur much in the broader arena of contestation, such as regional head elections.

In Pilkades (Village Election), the previous study discussed more material and spiritual aspects and was categorized as an established village, especially in rural Java (Aspinall & Rohman, 2017; Hidayat et al., 2018). The literature on Pilkades and the role of cultural aspects are still limited. We are investigating the Pilkades case in Tumbang Habaon, Central Kalimantan. Whether the candidate's victory in the Pilkades is still related to the mobilization of material resources or with their cultural behavior in the past. Then, they discuss how cultural actions in the past have attracted people's decisions to choose certain candidates.

This study's results are very important in building a framework related to reducing the use of money politics and other material sources. After the Reformation, many researchers considered that electoral politics at the local level was an arena for material

power struggles, so that the quality of democracy decreased. We want to discuss further the context of a village that is not well established and still purely holds cultural principles. Regarding Pilkades, that society is still oriented towards candidates who carry out cultural values.

At the initial stage, we will discuss the dynamics of the Pilkades in Tumbang Habaon, related to the implementation process. Then, the candidates' practices will be described, including the practice of buying votes and the form of winning networks. Previous studies were still limited to operationalizing local wisdom in communicating candidates to voters (Ardiansyah et al., 2019). We found Hapahari and Handep values as candidates' past actions based on exploratory views of voters. We argue that the candidate's victory in Tumbang Habaon Village was due to cultural actions in the past that shaped voters' opinion that the right leader is a candidate who is very close to the embodiment of local Dayak cultural values.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method of collecting research data is observation and in-depth interviews with key informants, including voters, village leaders, election committees and those related to the study's focus. We

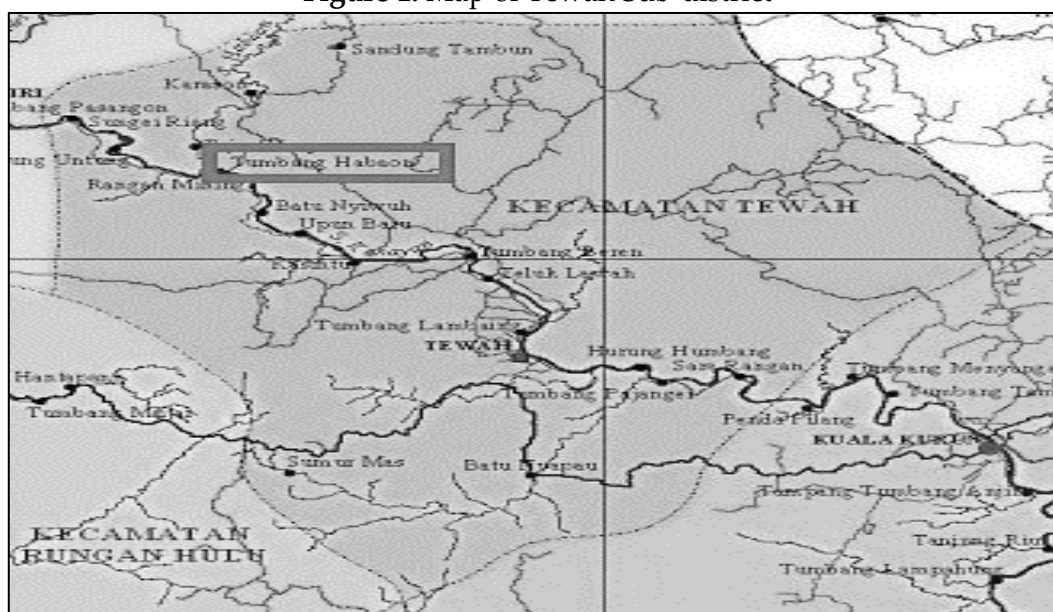
also collected literature, international journals, Pilkades implementation reports, cultural books, and related literature. The data collected will be classified into cases to build patterns between cases. We explore candidates' practices in Pilkades and voters' views on candidates' actions. Primary findings will be analyzed holistically, adhere to the data's validity, and include a case study quality test (Yin, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2016).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pilkades in Tumbang Habaon

Tumbang Habaon Village is one of the villages located in Tewah District, Gunung Mas Regency, Central Kalimantan. Tumbang Habaon Village has an area of 10.800 ha/m² or 9.81% of Tewah District area with an altitude of <500 m above sea level and is classified as a moderate plain with hilly conditions. Tumbang Habaon Village's distance to the subdistrict capital is 22 km, and the distance to the regency capital is 50 km, while the provincial capital is 230 km.

Figure 1. Map of Tewah Sub-district



Source: obtained from primary data, 2019.

The name Tumbang Habaon Village is taken from the name of a tributary, the Habaon River. Tumbang Habaon Village has a population of 742 people, with 365 males and 377 females. Based on age, the population of Tumbang Habaon Village is classified into (1) 16-55 years old, as many as 394 people (53%);

(2) 0-15 years old, as many as 283 (38.2%); and (3) > 55 years old, as many as 65 people (8.8%).

Gunung Mas Regency Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2015 regulates the holding of simultaneous village head elections in 2016, 2018, and 2020. According to this regulation,

there are several stages and channels, namely registration of prospective candidates, determining candidates, establishing the final voter list, campaigning, voting vote, and determination.

At the stage of nomination, the election committee received five files of candidate village head candidates, namely: (1) Gunawan Kristianto; (2) Meidayana; (3) Yunatie; (4) Sudirman; and (5) Fitriyanto. However, when researching the completeness of administration and clarifying potential candidates, some prospective candidates did not meet the requirements and resigned. Gunawan Kristianto was annulled because he did not submit a recommendation letter for the Regent of Gunung Mas Regency for his status as a civil servant. Fitriyanto resigned before the candidate's nomination because he was accepted to work at the Gunung Mas district government agency. Based on this, three candidates for village head were determined, including (1) Sudirman; (2) Meidayana; (3) Yunatie.

The village head election committee announces the Final Voters List (*Daftar Pemilih Tetap/DPT*), which amounts to 420 voters by the stages. On 24-26 October 2018, candidates carry out an open campaign and convey their vision and mission for three days until a calm period. During the campaign period, the village head election committee held an open campaign session for all candidates' pairs. On the last day of the campaign, a stage was provided by inviting all Tumbang Habaon Village people. We observed that the community was very enthusiastic about listening and listening to prospective village heads convey their vision and mission. The open campaign session was the first to be held in the history of *Pilkades* Tumbang Habaon.

Voting was held on October 31, 2018. We consider that the voting took place democratically and conducive. Based on the vote count results, the election results for the village head of Tumbang Habaon were determined, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Votes Result

No	Candidate	Vote Acquisition	%
1	Sudirman	168	53,67
2	Meidayana	39	12,46
3	Yunatie	98	31,31
Invalid ballots		8	
Voter attendance		313	
Final Voters Lists		420	

Source: obtained from primary data, 2019.

Sudirman succeeded with 53.67% of the votes. According to the interviews with voters, it was stated that Sudirman was not a native of Tumbang Habaon Village, unlike other candidates who were of

native descent. By obtaining the most votes, Sudirman will be the elected village head candidate. Furthermore, the village head's selection committee will submit the decision's results and then

submit them to the Village Consultative Body (Badan Permusyawaratan Desa/BPD). BPD Tumbang Habaon issued Letter Number 22/BPD-TH/XI/2018 concerning the proposed ratification and inauguration of the Elected Village Head to the Regent of Gunung Mas Regency. On February 6, 2019, the Regent of Gunung Mas Regency authorized and appointed the Head of Tumbang Habaon Village. After being inaugurated, Sudirman officially carried out his obligations as the Tumbang Habaon Village Head for the 2018-2024 period.

Orang Kepercayaan, Cash and Cultural Aspects in Pilkades

Almost all Pilkades in Indonesia have not fully implemented a clean and fair democracy. At some point, the candidate loses confidence in the contest, so he must rely on vote-buying practices, pay a winning team (broker) to find voters, and use spiritual power.

In the dynamics of Pilkades and winning, related studies have illustrated the candidates' efforts to reach voters. Candidates use the influence of the Blater in influencing the votes of voters in Banjar

Bangkalan Madura Village (Ainillah, 2016); Mranggen Village using Gapit as a voice broker (Tawakkal, 2017); using Kiai influence (Azwar, 2017); and Sesepeuh (Yuningsih & Subekti, 2016).

The fact that we observed in the Pilkades Tumbang Habaon, is that each candidate uses a winning network called *orang kepercayaan* (right-hand man). We discover that the *orang kepercayaan* network is a family network. The *orang kepercayaan* of each candidate is then appointed as the communicator and intermediary to the voters. We conducted in-depth interviews with each candidate's *orang kepercayaan*. They noted that the momentum to communicate with voters was very short, but the family structure could make it effective. In the series of Pilkades Tumbang Habaon, several community activities, such as religious prayers, are routinely held every day. This opportunity is used to attract voters' sympathy and convey the candidate's message to the maximum extent possible.

How do candidates keep trusted people from doing their job? We searched and interviewed the *orang kepercayaan* of each candidate. They stated that there was a commitment between the candidate and *orang kepercayaan* in the form of cash. They claim to have received some cash to carry out their winning mission. When asked, they did not give exact figures regarding the amount of cash received. However, their answers were between IDR 15-25 million. The money is used for the winning process, rewards, and vote

purchases. All candidates do the same. Orang kepercayaan says that Tumbang Habaon Village is small and the voters are few. It doesn't take a lot of money to influence voters.

We also explored voter views on the issue of orang kepercayaan and cash. The view that can be summarized is that voters see differences between each candidate in managing trusted people. However, the trend that occurs for all candidates is very dependent on trusted people to get maximum results. There are criteria for being an orang kepercayaan. According to Asie, Sudirman as a candidate focuses more on orang kepercayaan as influential figures in society's eyes (personage). Meanwhile, the other two candidates chose it because of the basis of social relations in the form of close friends and close relatives.

Regarding cash, voters claimed to have received it from trusted people and candidates. We interviewed voters in Pilkades that said they received cash amounts of between IDR30,000-50,000 per head. They stated that Tumbang Habaon Village was very friendly with this behavior and there was no reporting to each other regarding the practice of vote-buying. Approximately 67% of Tumbang Habaon Village residents are farmers and breeders included in the voter list. According to the cash portion of the expected.

Ikui Gara, head of the election committee, revealed that the general phenomenon of Pilkades had influenced the people in the Gunung Mas Regency's minds as dahuyan manjatu (windfall). Don't wait for cash, but pick up the ball for the candidates. Voters confirmed when interviewed, saying: *ela nampuli oloh nenga rajaki* (don't be rejected if people give fortune).

The general phenomenon of winning teams and cash in Pilkades also occurred in Tumbang Habaon Village. What is different is only in terms of scale and village type (Yuningsih & Subekti, 2016). We assess that in the Pilkades Tumbang Habaon, every candidate has carried out the same practice, namely relying on trusted people and giving cash to voters. There is a slight difference from our observation that Sudirman did not carry out this practice massively but was able to win the Pilkades Tumbang Habaon.

We have triangulated the views of voters. Sudirman's quiet and seemingly lackluster behavior prompted us to dig deeper. What exactly is Sudirman's uniqueness that earned him the trust of voters? The villages in Central Kalimantan, especially towards the interior, really appreciate cultural aspects, let alone Dayak culture. Strictly speaking, we interpret the cultural aspect here as very different from the aspects of magical belief and

religious cultural construction as in previous research (Herdiana, 2019; Hidayat et al., 2018; Tjahjoko, 2020). Ardiansyah et al. (2019) focused on candidate victories by highlighting local wisdom. Their study focuses more on how candidates communicate, while our way of analysis is more on how candidates act in the past and their impact on Pilkades contestation.

Our study finds that what distinguishes Sudirman and other candidates is his past actions and their impact on the Pilkades Tumbang Habaon. Sudirman embodies the concept of *Hapahari* and *Handep* in attracting sympathy and support from the voters. We are not interpreting what Sudirman said, but rather, we are interpreting the views of Sudirman loyalists regarding his actions. We conclude from the opinions of the voters that Sudirman, according to them, is a *pahari* (close relative) and likes to help. Etymologically, the terms *Hapahari* (brotherhood) and *Handep* (help mutual) are expressions of the Dayak Ngaju language, which is the embodiment of the *Betang* culture. Physically, the *Betang* is the house where the Dayak tribe lives and has produced the Dayak community's values (Florus, 1994). In its form as a culture, *Betang* is a way of life for a community that develops and is shared and passed on from generation to generation. The

Betang is a metaphor for togetherness in the daily life of the Dayak tribe who used to live in the *Betang*. In the past, the Dayak people's traditions, the *Betang* was not just a place to shelter and gather all the family members. More than that, *Betang* is the heart of the social structure in the Dayak community's life. Every individual living in the household and society is systematically regulated by utilizing collective agreements as outlined in customary law. In particular, common security issues such as criminal interference, sharing food, joy and sorrow, and mobilizing energy to work the fields. The prominent value in life in *Betang* is the value of togetherness (communalism), regardless of the differences they have (Widjono, 1998; Laksono & Riwut, 2006; Karliani et al., 2018; Jarias, 2020).

First, *Hapahari* means brotherhood and togetherness in life in *Betang*. They consider each other to be brothers who must be protected and helped when there are difficulties. Their expression to show the meaning of *Hapahari* is "sama keme, sama mangat, sama susah" (both feel, are equally happy, are equally difficult). There is a principle that says both joy and sorrow are lived together (Suwarno, 2017). In their simple example, they value outsiders or guests by trying to provide satisfactory service. On the other hand, the treatment of other people outside the

Betang community is Hapahari. Another example, in daily meetings or conversations, the word *itah* (we) is often used: "akan lewu *itah* kea" (for our village too), "uras *itah* eh jaton oloh beken hetoh" (all of us are strangers). These expressions are defined as the attention and attitude of the Betang community towards others outside the community.

The term of Hapahari, which used to be used by the residents of Betang in the past and is now widely applied, is not only applied to the interactions among Betang residents but to other people outside Betang. We once interviewed one community where Betang residents always instilled the principle that guests are everything-serving guests first, then helping family members. According to Betang residents, appreciation and respect for guests are *kahanjak atei* (happiness). If guests are not satisfied with their service, then they are hurt and vice versa.

Second, Handep means helping each other. Previously, Handep was seen concretely in the cultural activities of the Dayak tribe, namely the death and the marriage ceremony, clearing land, planting rice, and other traditional ceremonies. Handep is done in all aspects of life where the work cannot be done alone but requires help. Handep requires a clean heart, far from hatred

and envy (Uda, 2012; Sarjoko & Demitra, 2018; Husni, 2020).

Handep practice is carried from generation to generation. There is no element of coercion for the people who will practice this culture. When there is a death, empathy comes to the bereaved family's aid by bringing in just enough rice, sugar, coffee, and money. This is intended to ease the burden on a bereaved family. The results of our interviews with the characters, the thickest Handep used to be seen in the preparation and implementation of funerals and weddings. Relatives will assist families who carry out marriages with objects, materials, energy, thoughts, and attention, especially if the person carrying out the wedding ceremony is economically incapable and needs support to ease his face. Marriage is one of the most important in the Dayak people's life because if the implementation is chaotic and not as expected, self-esteem and family dignity will be tarnished.

The Handep value can also be seen from the daily activities of the village community. When the rice planting season arrived, the residents came to help a friend who was planting rice. According to residents, this activity takes approximately one to three days. Even to work the fields for one family takes two to four days. Suppose the person who normally carries out

Handep cannot attend due to illness or other urgent needs. In that case, another family member will be replaced so that the continuity of the Handep is maintained and carried out.

How does the Hapahari and Handep culture encourage voter decisions? According to the voters interviewed, when he met residents, Sudirman would greet residents by starting with the word Pahari, wherever and whenever he met residents, long before the Pilkades was held. The residents were very flattered by the hospitality. Even though they were not related by blood, their perception was that Sudirman was their sibling and relative. We also observe the expressions conveyed by Sudirman's trusted people in taking voters' sympathy. He said, "mun ulih awi kahanjak atei itah mamintih pahari Sudirman" (let's be happy to choose our brother Sudirman).

Then, related to Handep, we summarize the opinion of the voters that Sudirman is a person who likes to Handep (likes to help). We distinguish Sudirman's actions in helping residents with reciprocity in clientelism or patronage (Hicken, 2011; Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2015; Ravanilla et al., 2018), slightly different in motive. Sudirman did not have any encouragement for the Pilkades because they were carried out. After all, residents needed assistance. Meanwhile, patronage and clientelism

are carried out because of the impetus for future political gain. We stick to the voters' assessment that Sudirman is capable of often doing good. According to them, this was reflected in Sudirman as a servant leader.

We also explore what Sudirman has done. Based on public recognition, Sudirman helps residents in grief, namely being present, sympathetic, and giving donations. Social assistance is also carried out, especially land disputes between residents. The Tiwah ceremony (the death ceremony in the Hindu Kaharingan Religion) lasts seven days and seven nights in religious ceremonies. Sudirman's action was to aid in carrying out the ceremony, namely material, presence, and sympathy. One of the voters said about Sudirman, "iye tapintih awi iye bajenta bajorah, matehau ikei pahari en mandohop itah" (he was elected because he was friendly, called us family and always helped the people). In our opinion, what Sudirman did is an act of the past. However, when Sudirman established himself to contest the Pilkades, voters associated Sudirman's actions as a vigor worthy of leading the village of Tumbang Habaon. This is the common thread between Sudirman's past behavior and actions and voters' encouragement to make his choice. We interpret Sudirman's actions as social and cultural behaviors that

impact people's beliefs to elect him as village head.

CONCLUSION

The dynamics of the Pilkades Tumbang Habaon are still colored by the practice of buying votes and optimizing orang kepercayaan to distribute and influence voters' views. Tumbang Habaon is relatively small and does not require a large team structure. Only one or two trusted candidates handle people.

Our study found a strong relationship regarding the application of non-material aspects to candidate wins. The Hapahari and Handep cultural aspects that originate from the Betang culture have been considered lucky by Sudirman as the elected village head candidate. This study contributes to a framework that goes beyond the political determination of material resources based on candidate victories. However, our findings provide a new variant because they focus on the views of voters. Unlike previous studies that highlighted candidates' efforts when dealing with other candidates' behavior (Yuningsih & Subekti, 2016; Hidayat et al., 2018; Tjahjoko, 2020). We consider that the community's decision to vote is not related to each candidate's political practice in the series and implementation of Pilkades, such as the campaign. We emphasize that voters decided to choose a candidate due to cultural and social

goodness in the past without being aware of it by the candidate himself.

This study has implications for the framework of electoral politics and local democracy in Indonesia. Village political democracy still induces cultural values as a reference. However, this is still the behavior of a homogeneous and unestablished society. The candidate's strategy for mobilizing material resources is a portrait of Indonesia's decreased democracy (Aspinall & Warburton, 2017). To establish a political ideology, candidates can seek a local cultural orientation in reaching voters in other places. Of course, this is an idea to shatter a material political culture.

The limitation of this study is whether the candidate has taken into account from the start of this contestation whether the action is purely a cultural act without considering its future benefits. Hopefully, further research can answer this.

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