

The Dilemma of Local Democracy in Bali: Two Sides of Power in the Election of Perbekel

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Abstract: *This article discusses the dilemma of selecting perbekel in Bali. There is an opportunity to break down the kinship system among the masses of voters, who are in the two realms of customary and official power. In this position, there is an interest bias. The bet on the mass of voters positions the two in a potential division. This article starts with the basic problem of how the two sides of power work in selecting equipment in Bali. This article departs from an analysis of the institutional rational choice theoretical frame, one of the approaches in political science. This article shows the perceptual aspect related to the potential dilemma of the working of local democracy in Bali, which is considered to include the polarization of power between traditional villages and service villages. This research is descriptive-qualitative in nature and involves conducting interviews with traditional village figures, elites, and government agencies. The results obtained only guarantee electoral accountability. The village dilemma is between two powers: domination power on the one hand and hegemonic power, as well as power relations in building patron-client relationships in the essence of selecting village heads, or perbekel. In reality, the practice of exercising power in villages in their original autonomous capacity is more hegemonic in nature. This condition then allows for such a strong network to exist between residents. On the one hand, psychologically, the development of this network is also colored by calculations of economic interests. It is this calculation of interests that often disrupts relationships between citizens. Both in the capacity of official villages and traditional villages, including the presence of vertical government.*

Keywords: *power dilemma; traditional villages and service villages; selection of perbekel.*

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Introduction

One indicator of the progress of democratic practice is the practice of election. This practice must have continuity, or continuity guaranteed by regulations. The electoral process does not only take place at the national level but also at the local level, including at the village level. The village is a grass-roots area, and in this area, the concentration of residents mostly resides in the village. It's just that in practice, the mass intensity of the electoral process at the village level is very low compared to elections for regional heads, such as governors, regents, or mayors.

This article will discuss the ambiguity or dilemma of ongoing contestation. On one side of the village, there is autonomous power because this is where real power originates and operates. However, on the other hand, the election of village heads is overwhelmed by the power of materialism. The power of materialism is interesting to observe because what emerges is the practice of patronage. A patron-client network can be defined as a system in which clients provide services and support in exchange for the benefits of greater power and resources from a patron (Scott, Roniger, in Pedersen, 2021).

Patron-client practices in power at the village level can be traced at least to the New Order government, with political structures built in such a way through personal and patron-client relationships (Antlöv, 2003). A study conducted by Antlöv (2003) found uniqueness in the practice of patron clients in Indonesia, namely state clients who were not foreign officials who came in government cars but were community figures. The presence of these clients in people's daily lives is important in explaining the stability and legitimacy of the New Order, where the

following still occurs today: This practice often contributes to perpetuating the power held by a handful of family elites in Indonesia, as according to Kammen (2018), it is common for family dynasties to hold the position of village head for years.

It is this patron-client practice that then gives rise to the practice of buying and selling votes, which in turn takes away the authority of village interests that run in harmony with their original interests. Villages in genuine democracy display a face of harmony. Community trust is established with each other, including in the leadership selection process that takes place within it. In this position, the village is involved in the election process, which is carried out based on deliberation and consensus. In fact, this practice was already in place before modern villages recognized the practice of election, which included the capacity of the majority vote. This position consequently includes patron-client practices.

This client patronage is indeed a form of democratic conflict because democratic practice actually emphasizes the aspect of openness or fairness. In conditions between the two parties, there is an effort to exchange. Social actions are carried out based on instrumental, rational measures. This rational instrumentalist measure is an indication that their numbers are increasing in Indonesia, including during the implementation of the electoral process at the national and local levels, including villages. This rational, instrumentalist measure can be observed in the widespread patterns of money politics that accompany the village head election process. The tradition of giving money is not something new in the village head election process, but in the past, giving money was more voluntary and more a

form of compassion to ask for blessings from residents. In the current context, giving money to village head candidates is more transactional and done openly.

Not to mention, the dilemma of implementing the village democratic pattern in selecting its leaders has also experienced a shift, being more colored by demands from the government above. This fact causes a change in the behavior of village heads who are more pro-state (as a source of political power) rather than siding with the community (as a source of social power). As a socio-political entity, the village, which existed earlier than the state, is increasingly burdened by a system of power relations with various supra-village powers. In fact, villages, as the basis of life for the lowest society, have a variety of potential local wisdom that should continue to be preserved.

Not only that, the village's original position in democratic practice was also uprooted when faced with the power of vertical government dominance. Even in this condition, the position of the village, which, in the course of its history, began to be deprived of its original role, was precisely when the state appeared with its formal position. We are, of course, witnessing several regulations that specifically regulate villages and local governments, such as districts, cities, and provinces. In this position, villages are often used as subjects, either subject to power or exercising power, even though they are not fully autonomous.

It is in this position that this article will look at the position of villages with strong traditional customs, such as in Bali, and on the same side, where there is official power that still persists. An office that seeks to represent the interests of the state in the capacity of vertical interests and domination of the government above it. However, on the other hand, there is the

existence of traditional villages, which remain even though their main tasks and functions are different. Democracy that operates in its procedural capacity at the village level includes the practice of elections. This election includes the autonomous position of the village, where the practice of election, which should substantially bring the substance of democracy, actually, in practice, injures this substance by involving conflict. The conflict that results is more based on the practice of calculating profit and loss. This calculation then has consequences for village autonomy.

This article will look at the power struggles that take place at the village level, where, on the one hand, custom plays a central role in regulating communality, but on the other hand, there is power that cannot be avoided, namely the power of interests dominating vertical government power. This vertical government power also provides dynamics for how villages maintain their original autonomy.

The village dilemma is between two powers: domination power on the one hand and hegemonic power, as well as power relations in building patron-client relationships in the essence of selecting village heads, or *perbekel*. In reality, the practice of exercising power in villages in their original autonomous capacity is more hegemonic in nature. This condition then allows for such a strong network to exist between residents. On the one hand, psychologically, the development of this network is also colored by calculations of economic interests. It is this calculation of interests that often disrupts relationships between citizens. Both in the capacity of official villages and traditional villages. Incumbent in the village head election, for example, the relationship was felt to be increasingly strained during the village

head election competition, which incidentally was held in a pluralistic society that still emphasized the community character of the community.

The condition that occurs paradoxically is the emergence of anomalies in the practices of village government administration, which include a duality in the selection of equipment. In the capacity of selecting existing equipment, there is competition, which includes the essence of conflict. The essence of this conflict lies in the capacity for mass mobilization of voters. In terms of its function, it is one of the procedural democratic routines that runs even though, from a substantive perspective, it is still far from the expected idealization. Even though in reality the institutional structures of official villages and Pakraman villages are also different, it is just that in the context of the substance of mass mobilization that occurs, there is a position that is never immune from the power between the two. The unequal level of power between the two, where custom dominates relations between citizens at the grassroots level, ultimately deepens the dimensions of this dilemma, even though in reality it is the one who has an autonomous position as an original village in the existence of an independent republic.

Substantially, there is no overlap between the structures of the two institutions. Likewise with the authority of both. Village authority, as formulated in Article 206 of Law No. 32/2004, is to carry out village government administration affairs. Specifically, the authority of the village originating from the official village takes care of existing government affairs based on the village's rights of origin in the village concerned only in terms of managing ADD and PNPM.

The village head and his apparatus

within the scope of the village service refer to the regulations of Law No. 32/2004 regarding what and how matters based on origin are carried out. Meanwhile, the authority exercised by Pakraman village is related to the authority to manage Hindu culture and religion. There is no overlap in the authority between the two types of villages. Each of them continues to exercise their respective powers. However, the election taking place at the grassroots level is considered to have sparked relations between citizens where interests are polarized in the interests of mass mobilization and ultimately have the potential to give rise to a completely dilemmatic position.

Studies that are close to this article are those from Ridwan (2018). Ridwan's study confirms the original autonomy of traditional law communities, which has been uprooted due to vertical government authorization. The implementation of Bungo Regency Regional Regulation Number 9 of 2007 has given rise to several fundamental problems faced by the Datuk Sinaro Putih Traditional Government, whose territory includes Batu Kerbau Hamlet, Baru Pelepat Hamlet, and Lubuk Telau Hamlet in Pelepat District, Bungo Regency. This problem starts with the existence of dualism at the village institutional level. This is due to the role of Rio (the village head), who is very free to regulate all customary issues in the Datuk Sinaro Putih customary law community, which has so far been regulated by the traditional institution led by the traditional leader. Through the use of descriptive qualitative methods, this article confirms the existence of the authority of the Datuk Sinaro Putih Traditional Law Community, which has been practically interfered with by vertical government authorities, namely the Regional Government, where in reality the

Bungo Regional Government allows the palm oil company PT. PML to cultivate Datuk Sinaro Putih's customary forest land. Rio's appointment as a customary authority in accordance with Bungo Regency Regional Regulation Number 9 of 2007 meant that Datuk Sinaro Putih's traditional authority was pushed and marginalized. They were helpless when the Bungo Regency Regional Government gave the Palm Oil Company permission to manage their customary forest area.

In this article, the author shows the dilemmatic position of the village when they have to deal with the power of investors who are intertwined with the local vertical government, but what is different from this article is the electoral aspect. The electoral aspect that confronts the masses of voters actually puts the village in a dilemma. In a context that forces a bargaining process, which is an exchange of interests between the two parties.

Actually, the dilemmatic position is not only a matter of election. In everyday life, the functional structural position of the village also experiences role conflicts between the two, such as those related to handling the population. In the dilemmatic position of the population as the karma of custom and service is different, Suparmi, Astawa, and Sutarjo (2014) see the intersection of interests between service villages and traditional villages. The perspective of the official village is to accept immigrants with complete personal identification and administrative costs and obtain the same rights and obligations as native residents. Meanwhile, the Pakraman village perspective is to accept immigrants with a complete identity, fees and contributions, and the presence of local residents who guarantee their existence with limited rights and obligations.

Addressing the dilemma regarding the position between the two, Warren once explained that:

"Balinese customary (adat) institutions intersect and engage in complex ways with bureaucratic (dinas) institutions within the modern Indonesian state. Although there are real differences between distinct aims and organizational principles at local and central government levels, and despite stereotyped images held by the bureaucracy of a contrast between traditional and modern institutions, they have demonstrated in some significant respects that they are relatively complementary." (Warren, 1991).

In this context, of course, the position of villages in Indonesia in the historical flow is generally an area in the self-governing community category. During colonial rule, villages experienced formalization, which also had the position of a customary law community unit. As a customary legal community unit, the village has a position of genuine autonomy. In this position of genuine autonomy, the village has the authority to have institutions developed to meet its living needs, such as political, economic, legal, and socio-cultural institutions. This traditional village also has the authority to own wealth, which is regulated in accordance with its own developed institutions (Nurcholis, 2002:19).

In the context of Bali, the existence of traditional villages and official villages has different positions. Traditional villages have authority in the customary sector and are implemented by traditional institutions as well. Meanwhile, the Service Village has authority in the field of government (administrative) and is implemented by government institutions (administrative) as well. On the practical side, traditional villages take care of traditional authorities such as ceremonies,

while service villages take care of administrative matters related to governance, which relate to day-to-day government management. In this position, there are conditions that place the village and its residents in a position of complete resistance to the conflict that always accompanies it.

It is in this role that village officials who are in the position of village head who is running as incumbent will always experience the potential for tug-of-war relations of interest between candidates. In this vortex, of course, Bali has a specific position, namely, a village where some of its residents are sometimes in the position of banjar residents. The banjar, which is in the position of authority of the traditional village, in turn influences how the capacity of the traditional village works in the process of democracy at the village level. Balinese culture holds a lot of potential for democratic values, which are still used as guidelines in social life. In general, the conflicts that occur in Balinese society include those between castes, politics, rulers, regions, and economics (Zuhro, 2009). These variations in the dynamics of social life reflect the dualism of the face of democracy in Balinese society.

On the one hand, Bali is an apolitical area where the people focus their lives more on the realm of culture, religion, and customs. However, on the other hand, Bali is also a political region because of its long history of political violence and because Bali is an area where the political constellation of the central government is contested. In such conditions, Bali is always in a dilemma position, including in its relationship pattern with the banjar, especially if there is a candidate for official village head who is the incumbent, who in fact is a resident of local customs. In this position, the potential for conflict is prone to occur,

even conflict resulting from the potential for vulnerable positions in economic and social status.

Method

Methodologically, this article uses a descriptive critical analysis of several existing literature studies. In collecting existing data through existing articles and the media, researchers critically examined the administrative and political positions of villages in Bali. This critical study is also based on several research activities that researchers have carried out, namely research related to traditional villages and official villages. The study of this condition also provides additions to several existing articles, which are then critically analyzed. The theory used by the author is the rational choice theoretical frame (rational choice theory), which is part of institutional theory. In this framework, the basic idea taken by the author is to further analyze the basis of action, bargaining, joint solutions, and transactional rationality in the practice of vote-buying for furniture and equipment elections in Bali. Referring to Kosandi's (2015) study, the rational choice theory in the approach emphasizes that social phenomena, one of which is the practice of vote buying, are the result of interactive practices that contain strategies as well as bargaining between rational actors to deal with problems together. The data obtained by the author in the field in this article is seen in the capacity to read the existence of interests between candidates and voters who are both bound by asymmetric interests. Both are bound by transactional interests and the mass struggle for voters in two village domains, namely traditional villages and service villages. This article was written based on research activities carried out in villages in Tabanan Regency. The choice of this area was because in this village area

there were complaints about the practice of buying and selling votes, which was allegedly carried out by unscrupulous candidates during the simultaneous village head election (*perbekel*) process being held in the Tabanan area. In this condition, the position of the village is in a dilemma of choice.

Result And Discussion

One of the root problems that creates a dilemma is the damage to family ties that arises from the practice of vote-buying. This practice directly opposes democratic principles and has the potential to disrupt both substantive and procedural aspects of democracy itself. According to Muhtadi (in Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019), the vote-buying phenomenon in Indonesia is relatively high compared to other countries in the world, although not all election campaigns in Indonesia are involved in the practice of buying and selling votes, and not all candidates do this. According to him, around 25–33% of voters in the 2014 legislative elections, numbering between 47 and 62 million people, received Muhtadi payments or gifts (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). The general pattern that describes how vote buying can occur is that the greater the number of voters, the lower the level of vote buying (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). There is a strong ethical dimension to vote-buying—that the system will collapse without an ethical basis, given the weak legal means that candidates have or enforcement efforts on this issue (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019).

Muhtadi (2019) argues that the widespread practice of vote-buying in Indonesia after the collapse of the New Order can be traced to the electoral reforms carried out during the transition period. Vote buying has become a widely accepted norm during election campaigns

in Indonesia (Muhtadi, 2019: 57). This is evidenced by the norms of reciprocity and respect inherent in society as an answer to the question of why vote buying and selling is still effective in rural areas: village communities often provide rewards in the form of votes to potential buyers (Muhtadi, 2019: 84). Indonesia's experience in vote-buying practices shows that partisan voters are three times more likely to be targeted compared to non-constituent voters because they are voters who are highly targeted (Muhtadi, 2019: 5). Even though vote-buying incurs huge costs for candidates, they still view it as a valuable political investment (Muhtadi, 2019: 57).

Based on research by Haili (2015), vote buying is carried out widely and intensively and can even significantly influence voter participation in the election process. However, the research shows that high participation is actually just pseudo-participation and can even damage existing family relationships. This phenomenon reflects irrationality in the electoral process and simultaneously strengthens the public perception that electoral politics requires large costs. This is due to the high costs that candidates have to bear in the competition, which consists of buying votes from voters. As a result, all democracies, or pseudo-democracies, can occur where democratic procedural mechanisms do not always produce substantial or true democracy. Some observers, as highlighted in Haili's (2015) study, describe this situation as a hybrid democracy, where democratic procedures are mixed with non-democratic activities.

Aspinall & Rahman (2017) also conducted a study related to village head elections, using a descriptive qualitative approach that discussed election patterns at the village level in Central Java. This

study reveals that in the village head election process, the practice of vote-buying has become commonplace. This provides advantages for election participants or candidates who have strong financial capital and extensive networks with officials from the regional level to the central government.

In its development, studies regarding vote-buying activities or buying and selling voting rights in the case of Indonesia are still mostly directed at studies at the level of regional head elections, such as a regent, mayor, or governor. Several studies, such as those conducted by Shahab (2016) and Widnyani (2015) for the specific case of Bali, have worked on this topic specifically. Shahab's (2016) study highlights the increasing number of reports about vote buying over time, especially in the context of regional head elections in Indonesia. The practice of buying and selling votes is studied as a finding that reflects efforts to compensate for voting rights through the lure of money or goods, which are voters' motives based on considerations of material economic rationality.

In a case study presented narratively with a quantitative approach, Shahab (2016) emphasized that in the context of local elections, respondents who live in rural areas tend to be more open to the practice of money politics and vote buying compared to those who live in urban areas. However, in criticizing the study, it was stated that the authors tend to simplify the driving factors and ignore the diversity of views on the practice of vote buying and selling, which is actually very dynamic.

Widnyani's (2015) study regarding the analysis of money politics in Gianyar Regency explains more findings regarding the mechanism of vote-buying practices in regional head elections in Bali. The

practice of vote buying occurs in two forms: directly, where candidates use trusted people through the winning team, and through election brokers. Driving factors in this practice include the desire for recognition and self-actualization for candidates, as well as the encouragement of the physiological interests of winning groups and vote brokers, as well as the desire for security from voters.

Berenschot, Capri, and Dhian (2021) use the term "democratic reform" to explain the change in the form of leadership at the village level after reform through a combination of democratic reform, diversification of the rural economy, and the competitive nature of village head elections. Through research conducted on village heads in Yogyakarta, Berenschot, Capri, and Dhian discovered a process of elite renewal in village government that was less hierarchical and service-oriented. However, the patron-client relationship between the village and higher authorities as it existed after the collapse of the New Order still exists. This study concludes that this elite transformation does not mean that social hierarchies in rural Indonesia have completely disappeared. This change in village leadership patterns indicates the emergence of a new village elite class, which is the result of patron-client relationships and large resources to facilitate vote buying.

Takeuchi (2013) conducted macro-research regarding the practice of buying and selling votes. Takeuchi conducted research in China, where he observed that the practice of buying and selling votes in the election process at the village level was driven by the presence of village elites, who were divided into political elites, economic elites, and social elites. The presence of these elites has significant power over entrepreneurs in the village

area or elites who have an important role in kinship relations. These elites have the potential to access public goods by utilizing their respective resources, such as political power, economic material resources, and kinship relations with local communities. These potentials are used as a basis for material exchange in the practice of buying and selling votes to win competition in elections at the village level.

Just like previous research, a study conducted by Bowie (2008) confirmed the practice of buying and selling votes as part of history that continues to the present (path dependency). This practice is believed to have become a deeply rooted part of society as part of collective memory and is difficult to eradicate easily. In this context, the practice of buying and selling votes becomes an ongoing chain and is manifested in the implementation of elections, especially for certain public positions. The supporting factor in this situation is the influence of the colonial government in the past, which then encouraged material control by a small number of people who were then referred to as the elite.

A study that is different from previous research is that conducted by Callahan (2005). In his study, Callahan focused more on exploring the perception factors that emerged among the voting public, potential leaders, and election committees related to efforts to anticipate the practice of buying and selling votes in village or district head elections. Callahan's study describes the practice of buying and selling votes in countries that are still relatively developing, where voters, candidates, and election committees are still driven by calculations of profits and losses or considerations of economic rationality.

According to Callahan, in Argentina, the practice of buying and selling votes often occurs in villages. This practice targets people who are still doubtful about the proposed leader candidate so that they have the potential to switch their support to another candidate. These people are often referred to as indifferent voters, swing voters, or indifferent voters. The practice of buying and selling votes in the context of villages in Argentina takes various forms, such as giving cash, giving necessities such as food, clothing, and even building materials, and even giving high-quality wine.

A similar situation to Argentina also occurs in Nigeria. In this country, the practice of buying and selling votes is carried out to gain an advantage in electoral competition at the local level. This practice involves elites or prominent figures in the local area who openly buy voting rights from the community. The money used in this practice comes from donations from prominent Nigerian businessmen whom Callahan calls "Godfathers" (shadow leaders). The practice of buying and selling votes in Nigeria is often accompanied by acts of intimidation carried out by members of political parties or government officials.

The importance of Callahan's study is that it subsumes different understandings of the practice of vote buying from the perspectives of voters, candidates, and election committees. The dominant understanding expressed is that the practice of buying and selling votes is considered a "political disease." This is because these activities are considered fraudulent and dishonest. This understanding has the potential to be transformed into solutions by identifying practices that are compatible with bourgeois democratic values. This understanding imagines that bourgeois

democracy is not a true form of democracy. This is because bourgeois democracy has the potential to exclude competent potential leaders and give primacy to the behavior of "gangsters" or middle-class elites. This elite is considered to have material advantages but lacks leadership talent. This understanding was intensively and widely promoted by the mass media so that, at one time, it succeeded in creating awareness among the public, especially voters, who organized themselves in the form of communities to fight all forms of vote-buying and selling activities.

A study conducted by Sukmajati and Aspinall (2014) confirmed that the practice of buying and selling votes is a form of money politics in Indonesia. One of the contributing factors is the characteristics of society, which tends to choose based on calculations of profits and losses or economically rational choices. In this calculation, candidates who offer incentives in the form of goods or money to individuals, families, or communities have a greater chance of winning. Stratification and differentiation in Indonesian society are also factors that influence candidate selection patterns, which are often not based on track records or work programs offered during the campaign period. The lure of material for reasons of economic rationality is chosen more by voters and is the main goal in choosing candidates who are involved in the practice of buying and selling votes. The voting public tends to accept material gifts from certain candidates, so that in the election process at the local level, the main goal of voters is to maximize benefits and minimize costs for themselves. However, both candidates and voters evaluate each other's interests and economic rationality calculations to determine which one is considered more profitable for them.

The voting public tends to prefer candidates who provide economic material such as money, basic food assistance, and the like. They will not consider candidates who do not provide benefits to them. The classification of money politics in Sukmajati and Aspinall's (2014) study is based on factors such as tribal ties, religion, age, employment, gender, community organization, and income, most of which were also studied by Callahan (2005). This practice of buying and selling votes has the potential to threaten democracy both from a substantive and procedural perspective (Takeuchi, 2013).

In a normative context, the election of village heads, or perbekel, at the village level is regulated by Regulation Number 65 of 2017 of the Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which amends Minister of Home Affairs Regulation Number 112 of 2014 concerning the election of village heads. These regulations are then implemented at a more local level through regional regulations. For example, in Tabanan Regency, there is Regional Regulation Number 1 of 2019, which is the second amendment to Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2016, concerning the election, appointment, and dismissal of Perbekel.

Interestingly, the author observes that regulations at the regional regulatory level often ignore specific rules regarding ethics and sanctions. Regulations at the regional level regulate more administrative mechanisms for selecting equipment. These things perceptually influenced many people, especially informants, so that they saw that events related to equipment were only seen as partial government interests or as administrative appointments that were transformed into an election process that

seemed democratic. Examples are regulations that place greater emphasis on aspects of funding or budgeting, the formation of election committees, terms of office for equipment, position change mechanisms, election stages, and other administrative requirements.

If we observe the practice of vote buying, which is regulated at a macro level by Central Government regulations, especially in Article 30, which relates to the ethical aspects and consequences of violations in the village head election process, it turns out that its implementation has different dynamics. At the practical level, the practice of vote-buying is difficult to detect because it is carried out in subtle and hidden ways. In judicial review, forms of vote-buying practices also have the opportunity to occur, especially in the perception of policy implementers who believe that several clauses in regional regulations actually provide space for these practices to occur.

One example is the regulation regarding the formation of an interim committee as regulated in Article 49B of the Tabanan Regency Regional Regulations. This article is considered to be resistant to intervention or even administrative intimidation by candidates or other external parties with interests. In the empirical practice observed by the author, the majority of informants stated that regulations at the regional level had juridically determined the parties involved in a participatory manner in village deliberations in overseeing the process leading to the determination of election results. This is also supported by the regulations in Article 49D, which involve elements of the community both formally and non-formally. Formal elements include traditional leaders, village communities, religious leaders,

educational leaders, and leaders at the village level. Meanwhile, non-formal elements consist of figures who are active in groups (*sekaa*) in the agricultural sector, such as fishermen, irrigation workers, craftsmen, village women's groups, and civil society organizations that assist poor communities and groups according to their characteristics. local community.

However, in practice, the implementation of these articles is still considered contradictory by informants. Resistance to the practice of vote buying has the potential to emerge widely, especially when the party responsible for implementing it, such as the Regency Government, does not carry out adequate outreach from the start regarding the direct election of *Perbekel*. This lack of socialization is seen by informants as a factor that triggers people's reluctance to participate in the election process at the local level because they feel that this activity is always vulnerable to intervention by parties that practice vote-buying in an effort to win political competition in the area.

Based on the theoretical framework of rational choice, political promises made by candidates in regional elections, which are expressed in public service programs to village residents, are often exploited and commodified in various forms of vote-buying practices. This practice involves providing compensation in the form of material benefits that benefit both parties, namely the candidate and their potential voters. There are also variations in this practice. According to research informants, some of these can be in the form of donations to groups of farmers and livestock breeders as well as donations to activities related to the development of social and cultural activities in youth groups at the banjar

level in each village. This assistance is provided intensively and frequently and is even integrated with existing social assistance programs at the legislative council level in districts that have a political element, especially in mass mobilization for the practical interests of certain political parties.

In implementing regulations related to village head elections, this clause often faces obstacles when activities occur that reduce or even violate positive values in democratic practice (misconduct). In this context, aspects of electoral accountability at the village level are often ignored or even forgotten. Justice or equality is also not given much attention. This can be seen in the lack of attention given to handling complaints related to violations in the village head election process, such as by the Election Supervisory Body or election supervisory committee, which should be the responsibility of the state. Even though the potential for violations in the election of village heads is very high, these institutions apparently do not have the authority or are not given authority to select perbekel. In fact, the process of preparing, implementing, and determining election results at the village level is dominated by vertical government bureaucracies, such as the local regency or city government. In its implementation, organic institutions from the district or city government, such as the Community Empowerment and Village Government Agency (BPMPD) and the Political National Unity and Community Protection Agency, have the power and are authorized by the Regent or Mayor to carry out village head elections at the village level.

According to the perception of most informants, candidates who have the opportunity to carry out vote-buying

activities are village or village heads who have previously held office, or incumbent candidates. In their activities, the opportunities for deviation vary, and they tend to adapt many routine village development programs, but with more personalistic characteristics. Programed donations or assistance in routine village development activities are usually allocated to community groups. The distribution of power in this case moves in two directions and is not dominant but rather networked or equal. This equality shows that there are transactional opportunities between candidates and individuals or groups of voters. This practice of buying and selling votes was carried out during the socialization period until just before the voting, although most informants considered it a form of pollution of democracy by involving the rational choice interests of each party. On the other hand, this condition is seen as the result of inconsistencies in democratic practices at the local level due to a lack of adequate socialization among citizens. In fact, sometimes access to information and socialization is also cut, where citizens should receive a transparent portion as in other local election processes, such as regional head elections (Pemilukada) and other election processes.

Even though the practice of buying and selling votes is considered deviant, most informants still perceive that this violates and undermines the principles of justice in the implementation of democratic practices at the local level. In their view, most informants considered that regulations related to the selection of equipment had a level of ambiguity, especially when these rules were translated into regional-level regulations, such as Regional Regulations (Perda). On the one hand, these regulations emphasize the importance of democracy,

which guarantees participation and simultaneous elections, but on the other hand, there is still great control over administrative arrangements by the vertical government, as well as a lack or absence of provisions that specifically regulate sanctions, especially regarding opportunities for vote-buying practices.

Most of the informants perceived that the opportunity for vote-buying and violations in the election of Perbekel was carried out by incumbent or incumbent Perbekel candidates. This is due to their authority in managing development budgets in the village, which can create risks that are exploited for candidacy purposes. In rational choice theory, one of the opportunities for the practice of vote-buying actually comes from the motive for utilizing village public funds. This process involves transactional and political bargaining, where incumbent perbekel candidates and elite village government actors, some of whom will become election committee members, have the opportunity to take advantage of it. This potential vulnerability is known as vote trading. Vote trading is a form of result that arises from the practice of vote buying, where there is potential for transactions between prospective candidates and election organizers.

There are opportunities for strategic interaction and negotiation between actors who seek to obtain optimal benefits for each party. The interests between candidates in regional elections and their voters are mutually bound by asymmetric interests, where both have transactional interests that are no longer dominated by power relations but are more networked in nature. These practices are often implemented through programs that involve clientelistic voting and loyalty bonds. There is patron authority, which is usually owned by the

incumbent candidate and his clients, including prospective voters, who are opportunistically bound by the interests of utilizing the budget. This condition was referred to by the informants as specific use of the program (by mentioning name and address).

This condition can also be seen through Pedersen's (2021) study, which emphasizes patron-clientism in the Balinese context. Traditional institutions such as banjars have a strong organizational basis and are used to implement government projects from the top down and to voice the interests of the people from the bottom up. Pedersen (2021) proposes this within the framework of diverse citizenship practices, including informal citizenship and the role of traditional institutions in democratization in Bali, emphasizing their connection to social structures and temporal dynamics that give rise to discussions around change and continuity.

Several informants stated that the practice of vote-buying has the opportunity to manifest itself in two forms of negotiation. First, invisible negotiations with behind-the-scenes lobbying practices. Second, negotiations have the potential to become the language of routine programs carried out by village bureaucratic officials, such as providing assistance to breeder or farmer associations, donations to socio-cultural development activity programs for youth associations at the banjar level, and even assistance in repairing worship facilities.

If we refer to the categorization carried out in the Aspinal and Rahman (2017) study, it can be understood that in the practice of vote-buying in the selection of equipment, there are various forms of assistance that involve certain value systems. The actor component consists of actors who are involved in the practice of

vote-buying, either directly (direct actor) or indirectly (indirect actor). These direct actors include groups or individuals who support one of the village head candidates (perbekel), including gamblers who are involved in this practice. Meanwhile, indirect actors are the prospective village head candidates (perbekel) themselves, along with bureaucratic officials at the vertical level and equivalents at the village

level who have an interest in the candidate. These actors then carry out strategic negotiations, such as intervening in the rules of the election, providing monetary or non-monetary donations, such as development programs or physical rehabilitation, and exchanging non-material aspects, which culminate in position placement as village officials.

Table 1. Vote-Buying Susceptibility Patterns

Aspect	Form or Practice
Actor Component	Direct Actor: Success Team, Bookie or Bebotoh
	Indirect Actors: Village Head Candidates, Bureaucrats within the candidate's circle of interests
Strategy	Money: Bribes in the form of cash ahead of the election that candidates give to potential voters
	Goods: assistance to individuals, families or groups of people, which is manifested in "discussions" on the form of routine village government programs which are funded from village funds
	Non-Material Symbolic Exchange: Opportunities for Position as Village Officials

Source: Author (2024)

In this context, efforts to accommodate the aspirations set out in regional-level regulations are mostly considered by informants to be mere idealization because the substantive aspects of these regulations are not supported by an adequate level of political education among citizens. Citizen participation and supervision of this process are considered to be still unbalanced, do not go hand in hand, and are even unable to keep up with the discourse and practice of vote-buying, which have adapted and taken various forms. This condition causes the position to become a dilemma. This dilemmatic position arises because of intervention from the vertical government, such as the sub-district government. In cases related to filling public positions, there is still the dominance of vertical government. The

selection of Inter-Time Perbekel is also inseparable from the dominant role played by the sub-district government.

The sub-district's role in supporting the implementation of the Inter-Time Perbekel Election is as follows: as a supervisor, monitoring the implementation of the perbekel selection from start to finish, facilitating the smooth process of selecting perbekel, and if the regent or deputy regent cannot inaugurate the selected perbekel, the sub-district head can carry out this task. In this position, the role of the sub-district head is very decisive in forming the power constellation. On the other hand, traditional village power is indeed autonomous, but in the context of elections, the two are still related. The relationship in this election should run in line with the kinship situation between

official villages and traditional villages. However, in reality, polarization often occurs, which should be counterproductive.

Conclusion

The village's position is very dilemmatic. This is especially true when in villages there is a practice of vote-buying in the election of equipment at the village level, where this still has a big chance of happening. The absence of express sanctions provisions for this practice in regulatory articles at the regional level also creates a space that allows individuals to negotiate for this practice to occur. Perceptually, the election of Perbekel is considered ambiguously a pure democratic practice. This is because, apart from the administrative arrangements by the vertical government, which is still strong and dominant, it is also perceived by many as ignoring strict regulations regarding sanctions. The condition that occurs paradoxically is the emergence of anomalies in the practices of village government administration, which include a duality in the selection of equipment. In the capacity of selecting existing equipment, there is competition, which includes the essence of conflict. The essence of this conflict lies in the capacity for mass mobilization of voters. In terms of its function, it is one of the procedural democratic routines that runs even though, from a substantive perspective, it is still far from the expected idealization. Even though in reality the institutional structures of official villages and Pakraman villages are also different, it is just that in the context of the substance of mass mobilization that occurs, there is a position that is never immune from the power between the two. One opportunity that allows this to happen is the practice of vote-buying. This especially happens

among perbekel individuals who are still in office and then have the opportunity to nominate again (incumbents). There are many opportunities for these violations to occur at the level of violations or irregularities in village budgets for election purposes. This condition then increases the chances of a dilemmatic situation occurring, especially in ensuring the continuity of democracy, as well as the potential to damage kinship relations between the masses of voters in the realm of power in traditional villages and official villages.

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