Fiscal decentralization in villages: high nepotism low capacity

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Abstract. Fiscal transfer of nearly one billion to the village accounts made the struggle for village heads tense. This tension is because the legacy of the village founder (huta), who is the basic foundation of village governance in the past, has to deal with liberal democracy in the practice of the current election of village head. Collective communitarian democracy as a feature of self-governing capacity at the village level has not been completely abandoned, but it has to carry out individual liberal democracy at the same time. In general, village heads in the two sub-districts of this study have participated in capacity building related to their duties and functions such as the preparation of the Village Medium Term Development Plan (RPJM-Desa), Village Regulations (Perdes), except the establishment of Village Owned Enterprise (Bumdes). Even so, the village documents are only slightly stored in the files of each village. The kinship politics of the village apparatus (village head, village secretary, village treasurer) as well as between village apparatuses, namely the Village Government Agency (BPD), were marked by a very close relationship. This kinship politics is because they are the first clan of the village. This village is only inhabited by the descendants of the clan group, and there is almost no immigration. The political implication of this kinship is a reluctance to monitor each other (both intra and between village units) when power abuse occurs.

1. Introduction

History always repeats itself. The repetition of the history is evident in village decentralization through one of the Nawacita programs of the Jokowi-Jusuf Kalla administration, namely building from the village. The implementation began with the enactment of Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Village Governance. Political configuration of village government is always politically laden throughout the Indonesian government. Throughout the New Order regime, villages that once had self-governing capacities were marginalized through uniformity. Heads of villages who have always been autonomous have to be dependent on the country's elites and politics. The village is always a victim of the supra-state (sub-district, district, province and central level).

The ‘big bang’ policy of village decentralization is expected to lead to radical changes at the village level, especially villages that are embedded with custom regulation (adat). The change was triggered by local patrimonial tensions with liberal democracy and fiscal decentralization (through Village Fund Allocation or ADD). Rural patrimonial culture is not necessarily compatible with liberal democracy as mandated by the village law which stipulates the process of direct election of village heads. This tension in emotional patrimonial culture with the practice of individual liberal democracy can be attributed to the history of village governance in the Toba Batak community [1]. The right of internal supervision in...
the affairs of the village is held by all the descendants of the male founder to the current village founder (raja huta), who became the owner of the village [2-3].

It is in line with the opinion of Sitor Situmorang that each village was headed by a founder of the village (raja huta), the descendant of his founder in the past (so many previous generations). The position is hereditary and adheres to the principle of inheritance rights in the hands of the oldest line (primogeniture). Toba custom determines the right of the founder of the village forever [4-5].

2. Research method

This study combined quantitative and qualitative paradigms, especially in data collection. The capacity of village government was explored through the spread of the questionnaire while the politics of kinship or dynasty was explored through in-depth interviews using simple NVIVO devices. The respondents were all village heads in two sub-districts with a total of 20 people. In-depth interviews were conducted with several Village Government Agencies (BPD) including traditional and religious leaders.

3. Result and discussion

The "Big Bang" policy of fiscal decentralization showed an increase in the budget transferred directly to the village treasury for the past two years (2016-2017). Fiscal transfer of Rp 700,000,000 per village was almost evenly distributed across villages without differentiating village categories (very underdevelopment, underdevelopment, developing and developed).

| No. | Village Name | Village Typology | Village Fund ( IDR ) 2017 |
|-----|--------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1   | Manalu       | Underdevelopment  | 639,477,000              |
| 2   | Sisordak     | Underdevelopment  | 657,765,000              |
| 3   | Horisan Ranggitgit | Developing   | 685,922,000              |
| 4   | Purba Dolok  | Very underdevelopment | 697,999,000           |
| 5   | Manalu Purba | Very underdevelopment | 700,468,000            |
| 6   | Hutajulu     | Underdevelopment  | 705,964,000              |
| 7   | Aek Raja     | Developing       | 721,997,000              |
| 8   | Hutatinggi   | Developing       | 740,000,000              |
| 9   | Batuarimo    | Developed        | 747,931,000              |
| 10  | Manalu Dolok | Underdevelopment  | 754,702,236             |

Source: Field Research 2018

Of the twenty (20) village heads in the two sub-districts, most of them were senior high school graduates (already fulfilling the requirements as mandated in the Village Law No. 6 of 2014 on Village Governance in article 50). None of the village heads attained bachelor degrees. Of the ten (10) village heads in Sipoholon Subdistrict, only three (3) village heads were able to operate computers. There is no single village in Sipoholon Subdistrict which has a Joint Regulation of the Village Head (Peraturan Bersama Kepala Desa). Even so, some village heads have issued a Village Regulation (Peraturan Desa) on Village Development Planning Budget (APBDes), but the documents were not filled properly. Nearly 80 percent (8 village heads) of village heads in each sub-district have participated in training in the preparation of the Village Medium Term Development Plans (RPJMDes) and Village Development Planning Budget (APBDes). However, almost 80 percent (8 village heads) of them have never participated in training on the establishment of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes).

Nepotism is rampant in the village government. Almost all village administrations, namely the village head (executive) and the Village Government Agency (BPD) as executive, have a kinship relationship as shown in figure 1 below. This picture shows that the village head (MH) has a kinship relationship with the village apparatus such as the village secretary (younger brother of one grandmother), Head of...
Development Affairs (brother or daughter of the legislator), Head of Government Affairs (brother or dongan sahuta). This kinship relationship is also interwoven with the staff of the Village Government Agency (executive) such as the Deputy of the BPD (sister), deputy chairman of the BPD (sister), secretary of the BPD (brother-in-law).

![Figure 1. Kinship affiliation among the village heads (MH) in village apparatus and village government agency (BPD) in Pagarbatu Village (source: field research 2018).](image)

Kinship is an important concept in explaining collective altruism. This form of collective altruism is evident in food sharing habits in community ties that live in remote hamlet [6]. This collective altruism can also be seen in the agricultural land rent system in an agrarian society. Small landowners and farm laborers can usually get leased land with a profit-sharing system from village elites who are still one of their relatives. Ownership of land including rental of agricultural land is usually based on kinship ties [7]. This kinship tie is also found in the furniture production chain in Jepara by Alexander [8]. The theory of kin selection, according to Hamilton, is a natural selection in which individuals will sacrifice themselves in order to save their closest extended relatives so that their genes remain intergenerational. Kin selection theory describes how cooperation can be organized around genetic kinship and is a fundamental tool for understanding cooperation within family groups [9].

Therefore, the agrarian society is not merely acting on a rational economy as the economists believe. Production, distribution, and consumption in an agrarian society, according to James Scot, at a certain level the assumption are "good faith economy," which in its purest form includes "no exchanges involving money and all ... relations ... on total confidence." Scott argued that these forms of reciprocity, asymmetrical as they may be, reflect one key principle of peasant understandings — of a "moral formula for interpersonal conduct" [10].
This study also showed that the village government bureaucracy is a "good faith bureaucracy" which refers to the clan bond base in order to uphold the supremacy of the clan and the continuity of the dignity of the clan from generation to generation. In other words, the village government bureaucracy at a certain level aims to build and maintain social clan ties. Maintaining the grandeur and sustainability of the clan at all times is a moral obligation and a noble duty of a surname. Furthermore, the nepotistic bureaucracy in the village is a reflection of custom (adat) emphasizing that one must fight for his clan and extended family.

It is different from the rational Weberian bureaucracy concept. However, this may also be due to the fact that the two villages are inhabited by people who are descendants of the founding clan of the village and the Boru clan who married the daughter of the founder of the village clan. Moreover, there are almost no migrants outside Batak. The natural characteristics of villages that know nothing about incoming migration are driving the occurrence of nepotism in the village bureaucracy.

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