

# The Values of Local Wisdom in Democratic Reinforcement in Bali

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## Abstract

The values of local wisdom in democratic reinforcement of direct general elections for the regional heads in Bali, - a case study in Badung regency-, proposes two problems: (1) How is the cultural struggle in political process of direct general elections for the regional heads in Bali? (2) What is the meaning of the values of local wisdom in strengthening the local democracy of direct elections for the regional heads in Bali? The method of research used in this study is descriptive-qualitative method. Democratic process in the direct general elections becomes a struggle arena between democracy as political culture of a large tradition and the values of local wisdom as a small tradition of the local society. The cultural struggle causes sustainable changes which resulted in collaboration and acculturation of democratic cultural values in Balinese culture. The values of local wisdom as the effort to strengthen local democracy of direct elections for the regional heads in Bali, has an important meaning in the political struggle, it can be seen from the values of Tri hita karana; Shanti lan jagadhita; Menyama Braya; Medarma suaka; Nyerahang dewek; Mepunia; Tatwam asi; and nilai segilik, segulu, selunglung sebayantaka, paras paros sarpanaya so that the values of local wisdom of Balinese society are used in strengthening local democracy rather than eroded by the current of democratization

**Keywords:** cultural struggle, meaning of local wisdom, democratic reinforcement, direct general election for regional head.

## I. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

June 2005 has become a new historical note for the transformation of local political culture in Indonesia. Since that time the general elections for regional heads and deputies have been directly conducted by people. Previously, the elections for regional heads and deputies were conducted through representative system by local parliaments. As a modern continuous 'project' in political field, it is inseparable from the success of the president and vice president election directly conducted in 2004 in strengthening democratic politics as globalization and reformation demand.

Amendment of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia Year 1945, Article 18 paragraph (4) mandates that "Governors, Regents and Mayors as the respective heads of provincial governments, district (regency) and city are elected democratically. At the beginning the word democratic in that article had caused a debate among officials, politicians and intellectuals, whether they are elected directly or with the representative system (indirect) as the norm that has been taking place.

The debate could end by ratifying the Law No. 32 year 2004 on Regional Government in which the Article 56 Paragraph (1) mandates that: "the regional heads and deputies are selected in a candidate pair held democratically based on the the principles of directness, general, free, confidential, honest and fair; Paragraph (2) states that the pairs of candidates are proposed by political parties or coalition of political parties, and the candidate pairs can also be carried on independently by complying certain requirements based on the Law.

Since then the local political process for the direct elections for regional heads and deputies for the 33 Governors, 349 Regents and 91 Mayors in various provinces, districts (regencies) and cities in all parts of Indonesia began to be implemented.

Free and fair direct regional head election is expected to become an important instrument in the process of democratization at the local level, where people in the regions directly elect qualified executive officers and be able to manage government more effectively, efficiently and productively (Harahap, 2005: 1).

According to Kleden (2004) a process of direct democracy is not conducted merely procedural, but is substantively producing leaders in the region who have capability, constituency, accountability, and integrity. It is meaning, leaders elected from a direct election by the people have leadership ability and capacity, get support from the people so it is easy for them to implement programs of development, and every policy resulted can be accountable and trustworthy. So according to Prihatmoko (2005: 21) it is considered as the best option in managing local politics become more democratic so it can pave the way for democracy in the local level, it can be as well considered to bring back the forces of local politics to set the direction of the policy and leadership of the region, represents the interests of the local people so that the elected leaders are the representation of the people who are directly legitimized by the people.

To fulfill these expectations is not easy and even many problems often arise. Changes in the setting of local politics through direct elections can affect the value system and the local political culture which have

become ideology of the region or local people. Direct democracy as an experiment of modernity at the global level is a great tradition that criss-crossed each other, interacting with the traditional values of local communities as a small tradition. The existence of cross-culture between a great tradition (globalization) and a small tradition (locality) has brought the current paradoxical as stated by Imawan (in Ari Dwipayana, 2004: 6). One exciting current to the "norms of the world", while another current arises the strengthening of the ethnic group, even doing a nationalism ethnic. While Nasir (1999: 176) sees otherwise, the expansion of global culture actually leads to increase awareness to the local or regional cultures.

The struggle of global and local political culture through the arena of general elections for regional heads and deputies is unavoidable including for the local democratic process in Bali. Bali as one of the islands that has beautiful nature, unique culture and local wisdom with various small traditions can not escape from the struggles of local political cultures. This study will examine the phenomenon by taking a case study in Badung regency. The choice of this location is based on considerations that: First, Badung regency is one of regencies conducting simultaneously local elections and it is the first regency in Bali which implemented direct election when the elections for regional heads were directly implemented in some regions in Indonesia. Second, Badung regency is the epicenter of the government, economy, tourism, and education in Bali, so the struggle of political culture became very interesting to analyze. Third, Badung regency, located in the south of Bali as the area of tourism, has a distinctive culture with the territories of the north part of Bali wellknown as a fertile agricultural region.

## 1.2 Problems

The problems of this study are:

1. How is the cultural struggle in the direct elections for the regional heads?
2. What is the meaning of the cultural struggle to the values of local wisdom in strengthening the democratic process of general elections for the regional heads in Bali?

## 1.3 Methods of Reserach

Type of data used in this study is qualitative data in the form of a narrative, expression, description, words, transcripts, interviews, and field notes. Data sources required in this research include primary and secondary data sources. According to Marsuki (1987: 55-56) primary data is data obtained directly from the research location and related to the research problem. Primary data is obtained from the first source through interviews or depth interviews to informants. Secondary data is data obtained from secondary sources, such as through libraries, archives, data on the statistics, and the mass media that are relevant to the study design.

Type of qualitative research uses research procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of written words and spoken data from people, and behaviors that can be observed (Bagdan and Taylor in Moleong, 1991: 3). In the qualitative tradition (Brannen, 2004: 11), researchers are using themselves as instruments, following the cultural assumptions and at the same time following the data, imaginative insights into the social world of respondents, so researchers are expected to be flexible and reflective, but keep taking distance in analyzing the object of study. The data analysis model used in this study is a model of interactive qualitative data analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1992: 20).

## II. Discussion

### 2.1 Cultural Struggle in Direct Elections for Regional Heads

A direct general election for regional head that was first time held in June 2005 in Badung regency was the arena of local political struggle which was full of contests. It contained political process involving the resources of politic, economic, legal, and social- culture. Politically, the process stages of the direct election for regional head begun from registering candidates, determining candidates, drawing the serial number of candidates, campaigning, voting, counting, and determining the selected candidates were the democratic procedures to be followed in the contest. Economically, preparing the event of local democracy by the Regional Election Commission as an independent election management board required a budget for the organization which was financed through the Budget Revenue and Expenditure of Badung regency. On the side of the participant, that is a political party or coalition of political parties that carries a pair of candidates required a political cost of financing all stages of the process that had to be spent. The candidates of regional head and deputy in Badung regency were required to have sufficient political funds to finance the political cost incurred in participating the political process. The local political contest required political costs as the sufficient economical capital to fund the activities.

The direct general election for regional head was implemented as a form of implementation of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia Year 1945, Article 18 paragraph (4) which states that "Governors, Regents and Mayors as the respective government heads of provinces, districts or regencies, and cities are selected democratically. Furthermore outlined in Law No. 32 Year 2004 on Regional Government, in particular

to Article 56 Paragraph (1) and (2) which states that: "the regional heads and deputies are selected in a candidate pairs held democratically based on the principles of direct, general, free, confidential, honest, and fair; the pairs are filed by a political party or coalition of political parties or individuals to meet specific requirements in accordance with Law. Furthermore, the election organizer set up the rules of the organizer and the organizing of the election based on the constitution and regulation. The arena of local democracy of the elections for regional heads and deputies takes place not in a vacuum, but in people's lives. That means the political contest is not free from values. Social and cultural values of local communities are crucial to the patterns of relationships and interactions among the various forces that affect society. The pattern of this relationship has crossed and has been symbiosis between the principles, means, political strategy and the principles, ways, strategies of other fields. Bringing the various influential forces as a form of cultural struggle includes: First, as a democratic modernity experiment at the global level, this is a great tradition that criss-crossed each other, and interact with the value system on local community as a small tradition. Democracy as a great tradition brings the values of liberal, namely freedom of expression and freedom of individual choice 'one man one vote'. Democracy also brings the value of respect for individual's freedom to use their political rights. It is directly in contact with the cultural values of local communities that is still framed with togetherness or collectivism in the indigenous community ties or the origin birth that is still firmly rooted in the small tradition of Balinese community. The struggle of these two cultural traditions has resulted in sustainable changes for the Balinese people by making adjustments through acculturation as a form of cultural accommodation and society flexibility in responding to the changes.

The second, structurally, using the approach of Nicalas Perlas (2000) through the theory of the three pillars (tree folding) of community shows the close strength relation of civil society, political society, and economic society. Segmentation of public power into the three main pillars has put the power of civil society which is based on the social and cultural capital into a force to be reckoned. The bargaining power of indigenous people through the *desa pakaraman*, *banjar*, *dadia* and *sekaa teruna-teruni*, *sekaa shanti*, are often used as an object of the campaign for the expectant couple to gain voter support. Civil society groups have become an arena for cultural struggle for the candidates to get the sympathy of people through indigenous communities. Cultural struggle taking place in the political arena of direct elections for regional heads has put the local culture as the entrance to the success of the political event, both by the organizers and the candidates.

## 2.2 The Meaning of Values of Local Wisdom in Democratic Reinforcement

Direct general election for the regional heads as a democratic process is the transformation of the western democratic values that begin reaching the global political life. Civilizing democracy by bringing the important values through direct election for the regional heads, the freedom to make choices through a voting system, the use of and respect for the rights of individuals (individualism) is a great tradition as the world norms. The choice of the democratic system has consequences for the implementation of the democratic values into the life of local communities in determining their leaders. This leads to a cultural meeting between the great tradition of democracy and the values that develop in the life of local communities.

During the general election for regional heads, it seems there is a sustainable change and acculturation between western democratic values and the values of local wisdom. It can be seen from the use of cultural symbols in the process stages of direct general election for regional heads and deputies either by the General Election Commission (KPU) as the organizer and by the pairs of candidates as the participants.

The General Election Commission begins the process of general election by using a cultural approach. It can be seen from: (1) launching cultural symbol of Anoman as a symbol of loyal and honest board for the election activity from administration process to the determination of the selected candidates. The tag line is "*Ngardi Bali Santhi lan jagadhita*" which implies 'realizing a peaceful and prosperous society'; (2) In the socialization program, the General Election Commission often uses *pakraman* 'traditional village', *banjar* 'village', *sekaa truna-truni* 'youth organization' as the component of indigenous organizations; (3) the General Election Commission as the organizer always conveys political awareness to the public through the moral messages, such as *tatwam asi* that means 'i am you and you are me', *basudeva kutem bakem* which implies 'we are brothers', *selunglung sabayan taka*, *paras sarpanaya* that implies 'togetherness', 'helping each other' and 'equality'.

In voting, the use of village halls as polling stations could facilitate the organizers to provide services to public in giving their voting rights. Organizers and people use traditional clothes to the public halls for voting. This implies meaning and feeling of the local culture in choosing their leaders.

Couples participating in the election as candidates, often use cultural symbols in any political activities. This cultural approach can be seen from: (1) the vision and mission of the candidates with the theme of *Tri Hita Karana* and *Jagadhita* as the philosophy of the Hindu's community in Bali. *Tri Hita Karana* implies achieving a balance and harmonization between man and God, man and man, man and natural environment. *Jagadhita* implies welfare; (2) in the campaign activity, the candidate couples often use cultural symbols by using custom

clothes, performing worship to temples, and doing social approaches by *sima krama* and *medarma suaka* as a form of traditional social communication used in the activities of customs and religion. Political activities and political communication conducted by the candidates are often performed in symbols and cultural activities by exploiting artists, particularly the art of *Bondres*; (3) the candidates usually conduct political approach by utilizing traditional organizations such as *desa pakaraman* as a form of traditional organization in Bali which has members (*krama*) and function to bind the indigenous peoples in implementing the tasks of social, development and religion; (4) Soroh as a form of Balinese community ties that is based on blood or descent also becomes the object of the political candidates. They are bound in a family temple called temple of *dadia* 'family temple'. The candidates do their political approach by using those approaches, and commonly when the people are celebrating religion ceremony in their temples the candidates award them cash as a form of sacrifice in order to support the ceremony.

Based on the description, it can be seen that the values of local wisdom in Balinese life as a small tradition is always present and utilized by both organizers and candidates across the local democratic process. This implies that the meeting between democracy as a great tradition and the values of local wisdom in the arena of general elections for regional heads and deputies in Bali does not get rid of each other, negate or hegemonic one another. However, they can meet, collaborate and acculturate each other. The values of local wisdom that grow up, develop and become community tradition can be the effort to strengthen democratic affairs and be present in the Balinese life.

### III. Conclusion

1. The democratic process in the direct general elections for regional heads has become arena of cultural struggle between democracy as a political culture of great tradition and the values of local wisdom as a small tradition of local communities. The cultural struggle has caused sustainable changes which resulted in collaboration and acculturation of democratic cultural values in Balinese culture.
2. The values of local wisdom as the effort to strengthen the local democracy of direct elections for regional heads in Bali has an important meaning in the political struggle, and it can be seen from the *Tri Hita Karana*; *Shanti lan jagadhita*; *Menyama Braya*; *Medharma Suaka*; *Nyerahang dewek*; *Mepunia*; *Tatwamasi*; and values of *segilik*, *segulu*, *selunglung sebayantaka*, and *paras paras sarpanaya* so that the values of local wisdom of Balinese community are used to strengthen local democracy rather than eroded by democratization.

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