

DEMOCRATIC VALUES OF MANJOMPUT NASINURAT IN VILLAGE HEAD ELECTIONS (CASE STUDY: SABUNGAN NIHUTA VILLAGE)

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses democratic values in the tradition of manjomput nasinurat in the village head election in Sabungan Nihuta V Village. This tradition is a legacy of the ompu (elders) who use a lottery system similar to arisan to determine village head candidates, before being continued with formal elections through voting as regulated by the government. The village community remains committed to choosing candidates who are elected through manjomput nasinurat, so that this tradition is able to avoid conflict in every village head election. This study uses a qualitative approach with observation, interview, and documentation methods. Informants include traditional figures, BPD heads, village heads, former village heads, former village head candidates, the community, and sub-district officials. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive model: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that democratic values as stated by Cholisin—namely deliberation, religiosity, tolerance, non-discrimination, solidarity, shared commitment, and shared interests—are implemented in this tradition. Thus, manjomput nasinurat can be seen as a form of local democratic practice that is rooted in cultural wisdom and is able to maintain social harmony.

INTRODUCTION

It is very important to maintain in carrying out daily life in community life. Democratic values are an ideology and a way of life because they contain good and positive meanings in maintaining harmony and avoiding conflicts that occur in community life. Democratic values have existed since long ago in the lives of Indonesian society but are still implicit in implementing them because in the past the term democratic values was still unknown among the community. In its application, democratic values can be like a certain local tradition activity in an area that is carried out with the aim of choosing a candidate for leader, making a rule, and so on.

However, not all traditions contain democratic values in their entirety. A deeper understanding is needed to identify these traditions carefully. In today's era, one of the applications of democratic values is through elections (general elections) to choose the candidate for leader

desired by the community. Elections are part of a democratic party consisting of presidential elections, regional head elections, village head elections, legislative elections. However, in its application, elections still often cause prolonged conflicts, especially in village head elections.

Where there are many factors that are very attached to the election of the village head, such as due to differences in descent, clan, social status, education, certain groups, jobs and various other factors that cause dissatisfaction which influence the emergence of conflict. This makes some villages take the initiative to use certain traditions as a way to overcome prolonged conflict in the Election. One of the villages that can avoid conflict in its area every time a village head election is held is Sabungan Nihuta V Village, this village is located in North Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra Province.

In the past, before the ratification of the general election in Indonesia, the ompu (elders/ancestors) in Sabungan Nihuta V Village had held discussions with the village community. From the results of the previous discussion, an election method was created called manjomput nasinurat which means taking what is written, a writing that says au do kepalala desa which means I am the village head. This method continues to be carried out until now. The local tradition method used is similar to the arisan activity, namely there is a lottery system. even though the election is carried out with local traditions, Indonesian democratic values are still observed by complying with the election mechanism that has been set by the government.

The tradition of electing village heads in Sabungan Nihuta V Village, refers to the Regional Regulation (PERDA) of North Tapanuli Regency, Number 07 of 2016, concerning the election of village heads, namely in article 1 paragraph 12 "a village is a legal community unit that has territorial boundaries that are authorized to regulate and manage government affairs for the interests of the local community based on community initiatives, basic rights, origins and/or traditional rights that are recognized and respected in the government system of the Republic of Indonesia". The initial purpose of the manjomput nasinurat election system was for equality, unity, and togetherness of the village community, without any influence of social status, certain groups and clan influence when the village head election was held in Sabungan Nihuta V Village.

Sabungan Nihuta V Village has several different clans and also descendants of varying numbers, there are clans with hundreds of descendants and there are also clans with dozens of descendants. To avoid irrelevant elections due to the influence of certain clans or groups and to make clans/groups with few numbers have no chance of winning, the manjomput nasinurat election system was created, so that there is a sense of peace and tranquility during the village head election. This local election tradition method has made the people of Sabungan Nihuta V Village never experience conflict during the village head election. This election method also avoids money politics during the village head election in Sabungan Nihuta V Village.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This study uses a qualitative approach that aims to describe the phenomenon of the manjomput nasinurat tradition in the election of village heads in Sabungan Nihuta V Village. Qualitative methods allow researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the democratic values contained in local cultural practices. According to Bogdan and Taylor in Tersiana (2018), qualitative research produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. This research was conducted in Sabungan Nihuta V Village, Sipahutar District, North Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra Province. The focus of the research is directed at the democratic values put forward by Cholisin, namely deliberation, religious, tolerance, non-discrimination, solidarity, shared commitment, shared interests. This study uses two types of data, namely primary data: obtained from direct interviews with sub-district heads, traditional leaders, village communities, BPD members, village heads, former village heads,

and former village head candidates, and secondary data: derived from supporting documents such as village office archives and scientific literature (journals, articles, and others). Data Collection Techniques were conducted by means of observation, interviews and documentation collection. Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model from Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2013), which consists of Data Reduction (Data from the field is reduced to focus information according to predetermined research variables), Data Presentation (Data is systematically arranged in the form of descriptive narratives to provide a complete picture of the research results) and Conclusion Drawing (Conclusions and verification are carried out continuously from the beginning to the end of the research process. This process aims to find the meaning and significance of the data that has been collected).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in Sabungan Nihuta V Village, which is one of twenty-five villages in the administrative area of Sipahutar District, North Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra Province. Of the total twenty-five villages, there are twenty-three villages with the status of self-sufficient villages and one self-sufficient village. Sabungan Nihuta V Village is included in the self-sufficient village category. This village is led by a village head who is responsible for organizing village government together with the village secretary and other village officials. When this research was conducted, the village head in office was Rahuddin Simanjuntak, who led for the period 2021 to 2027. Based on population data at the end of 2024, the population of Sabungan Nihuta V Village was recorded at 823 people, including children.

Geographically, this village has an area of approximately 24.47 km². It is located at a distance of approximately 6.5 kilometers from the center of the Sipahutar District government, if measured from the Sub-district Office to the Sabungan Nihuta V Village Head Office. The relatively small geographical and demographic characteristics of Sabungan Nihuta V Village and the social closeness between residents make this village a relevant location for studying local traditional practices, especially in the implementation of village head elections through the manjomput nasinurat tradition.

Values are abstract and ideal views that influence the behavior and appearance of individuals and groups in social life (Dewi & Risdiany, 2021), so that democratic values can be analyzed as a set of principles reflected in the practice of community life; as explained by Cholisin in Isnarmi & Agahirber (2021), democratic values include religious elements, tolerance, anti-discrimination, high solidarity, respect for plurality, commitment to shared prosperity, decision-making through deliberation, justice, rejection of capitalism, and anti-imperialism and colonialism, all of which are essential foundations in building a democratic, safe, and peaceful society. In this study, it is interpreted that the democratic values in the manjomput nasinurat tradition in the election of village heads in Sabungan Nihuta V Village are directed at the democratic values put forward by Cholisin (2005), namely deliberation, religious, tolerance, non-discrimination, solidarity, shared commitment, common interests.

Deliberation as the Main Pillar in the Manjomput Nasinurat Tradition

Deliberation is the main foundation in the implementation of the manjomput nasinurat tradition in Sabungan Nihuta V Village. This tradition prioritizes the principles of local democracy which are reflected through a deliberative process in decision-making. Before the implementation of the tradition, the village community collectively holds a deliberation to determine various important aspects, such as the date of implementation, determination of candidates from each ompu (descendants of elders/ancestors), location of the activity, and formation of the implementing committee. This process ensures that every decision is made in a participatory and consensual manner, reflecting the democratic values that live in the village community.

In the context of candidate selection, deliberation between ompu members is a mechanism to reach an agreement on who will represent them in the manjomput nasinurat tradition. If there is more than one candidate from one ompu, an internal lottery process is carried out to determine the representative, thus avoiding conflict and maintaining harmony between community members. This process also ensures that the selected candidates meet the formal requirements set by the government, such as a minimum of a high school education. The practice of deliberation in this tradition is in line with the democratic values recommended in the Indonesian government system.

As expressed by Cholisin (2005), deliberation is one of the main values in Pancasila democracy, which emphasizes decision-making through deliberation to reach consensus. Other studies also show that deliberation in village head elections can strengthen community participation and prevent conflict, as happened in the village head election in Matang Kumbang Village, where village deliberation was the main mechanism in determining village head candidates (Mawardi, 2023). Thus, the tradition of manjomput nasinurat not only functions as a mechanism for electing village heads, but also as a means to strengthen local democratic values, such as participation, inclusiveness, and consensus, all of which are rooted in the practice of deliberation that has become an integral part of the lives of the people of Sabungan Nihuta V Village.

It is God and Luck that Choose

Belief in God Almighty is a strong spiritual foundation in the implementation of the manjomput nasinurat tradition in Sabungan Nihuta V Village. The community believes that the process of electing a village head through this tradition is not solely determined by humans, but is a form of surrender to God's will. In this tradition, a roll of paper containing the words "Au do Kepala Desa" (I am the Village Head) is believed to be a symbol of divine choice, because only one of the rolls contains the writing, and whoever gets it is considered to have been directly chosen by God through His luck and will.

This belief shows how religious values blend with local culture in forming a socio-political system at the village level. As explained by Hidayati & Fatmasari (2020), religion plays an important role in shaping the norms and value systems of society, as well as influencing the decision-making process in social life, including in the traditional leadership system. In this context, the church is not only a place of worship, but also a center for social and cultural activities. The implementation of manjomput nasinurat is carried out in the church, including the announcement of the results and prayers said by the church elders before and after the procession takes place.

This is in line with Tambunan's (2022) findings that in the Batak Christian community, the church often acts as a moral and social institution that provides legitimacy to customary and traditional practices, including in the process of electing leaders. The involvement of the church and its figures, such as elders who provide prayers and advice to elected candidates, shows an integration between spiritual values and village leadership. This strengthens the community's belief that the elected village head is not only legitimate according to custom, but has also been blessed and approved by God to carry out his duties as a leader.

The Tradition of Manjomput Nasinurat: A Real Manifestation of the Implementation of Tolerance

The tradition of manjomput nasinurat preserved by the people of Sabungan Nihuta V Village is not only a cultural practice in the election of village heads, but also reflects the application of high tolerance values in community life. Based on the results of interviews with the local community, it is known that the sustainability of this tradition is highly maintained because it

is able to reduce the potential for conflict and maintain unity between descendant groups (ompu). The community collectively realizes that the election of village heads with a procedural democratic approach such as direct voting has the potential to give rise to horizontal friction, as has happened in surrounding villages that do not apply similar traditions.

In this context, manjomput nasinurat functions as a social mechanism to create harmony. This is in accordance with the views of Nasution & Purwoko (2020), who state that local traditions in indigenous communities are often an important instrument in maintaining social stability and avoiding polarization between residents. The tolerance that is built through this tradition is also reflected in the enthusiasm of the community in supporting whoever is elected, regardless of the origin of the ompu. This tradition not only strengthens the value of togetherness, but also encourages the realization of an inclusive and mutually respectful society.

Furthermore, the spirit of togetherness shown in the thanksgiving event for the elected village head, where all residents attended without questioning the final result, is a concrete reflection of the value of tolerance in collective action. According to Harahap & Silalahi (2022), the Batak people have strong social capital built on customary, religious, and mutual cooperation values, which significantly support the creation of a peaceful and socially just society. Thus, the tradition of manjomput nasinurat not only functions as a mechanism for electing leaders, but also as a unifying tool and a concrete symbol of the tolerance that grows in the social life of the Sabungan Nihuta V Village community.

Manjomput Nasinurat Tradition: Non-Discriminatory and Embracing All Groups

The tradition of manjomput nasinurat in Sabungan Nihuta V Village reflects a social practice that is fair, inclusive, and non-discriminatory towards groups or individuals in society. The procedures for implementing this tradition are designed in such a way by the ancestors (ompu) to ensure that all residents have equal opportunities in the village head election process. Through a deliberation mechanism, candidate candidates are selected not based on economic strength, education level, or number of family members alone, but on the basis of a mutual agreement that upholds social justice and harmony.

This tradition avoids the dominance of certain groups and provides space for participation for all groups, including minority groups. This is in line with the views of Nuraini & Santoso (2020), who state that local democratic practices based on traditional culture are able to minimize social exclusion and create a sense of belonging that is evenly distributed among residents. Concrete evidence of this principle of non-discrimination can be seen from the experience of the Sianipar clan, which, despite only consisting of nine family cards, has succeeded in nominating a village head twice through the manjomput nasinurat process, without causing resistance from other clans that are more dominant in number.

This phenomenon reflects the strong value of social equality in the Sabungan Nihuta V Village community, where every ompu has the same rights to participate in the village political process. It also shows how local traditions can function as a medium to strengthen social cohesion and solidarity between residents. According to Risman & Andayani (2022), in the context of a multi-clan society, structurally just local practices are an important means of building an inclusive and democratic society. Thus, manjomput nasinurat is not only a cultural practice inherited from ancestors, but also a representation of substantial democratic values, namely non-discriminatory, participatory, and upholding social equality for all villagers.

Solidarity as a Social Pillar in the Manjomput Nasinurat Tradition

The tradition of manjomput nasinurat in Sabungan Nihuta V Village is not only a unique and democratic means of electing a village head, but also reflects the high level of social solidarity

in the community. One real manifestation of this solidarity is seen during the thanksgiving ceremony for the elected village head. Villagers voluntarily donate rice, money, drinks, and other necessities without any coercion. This voluntary participation is not only material, but also shows concern, respect, and moral support for the elected village head and the continuation of the tradition itself.

This high level of solidarity emphasizes the importance of the value of togetherness (mutual cooperation) in the social structure of village society. In this context, solidarity is not just an act of helping others, but also becomes a social glue that strengthens relations between residents. As stated by Suyanto & Nugroho (2021), in rural communities, social solidarity is the main foundation that enables a harmonious communal life, especially in collective traditions such as elections or traditional celebrations.

In addition, the spirit of togetherness that emerges in this tradition also acts as a form of moral economy—an economy based on cultural and ethical values that emphasize the principles of mutual assistance and sharing. According to Hikmawan (2020), the practice of solidarity in local communities is a manifestation of collective moral values that maintain social cohesion and avoid fragmentation due to differences in social or economic status. Therefore, it can be concluded that manjomput nasinurat is not only a political or cultural ritual, but also a means of strengthening the values of humanity, brotherhood, and solidarity that strengthen the social fabric of the Sabungan Nihuta V Village community.

Joint Commitment as the Foundation for the Sustainability of the Manjomput Nasinurat Tradition

The sustainability of the manjomput nasinurat tradition in Sabungan Nihuta V Village cannot be separated from the collective commitment of its community. Although in the course of this tradition there have been misunderstandings that have the potential to cause division, strengthening the understanding of the importance of commitment and togetherness has succeeded in restoring the collective spirit of the community to maintain and preserve this ancestral heritage. This commitment is the main foundation that ensures that this tradition continues to run harmoniously and sustainably. According to Anderson (2018), the success of preserving cultural traditions is highly dependent on the level of social commitment held by the community. A strong commitment creates a sense of collective responsibility in maintaining inherited cultural values and practices, while also being a social glue that prevents internal conflict.

This is in line with the findings of Putra & Sari (2020) who emphasized that in the context of village community traditions, collective awareness of ancestral values encourages active participation in preserving traditions, thereby strengthening social cohesion. Furthermore, this joint commitment is not only limited to maintaining tradition as a cultural heritage, but also contains positive values that strengthen the identity and social life of the Sabungan Nihuta V Village community. Thus, commitment and togetherness are the keys to the sustainability of the manjomput nasinurat tradition which remains relevant and functions as a medium for social strengthening amidst the dynamics of changing times.

Common Interest as the Main Goal of the Manjomput Nasinurat Tradition

The tradition of manjomput nasinurat in Sabungan Nihuta V Village is carried out with the main aim of creating harmony and unity among all levels of society. This tradition ensures that every group or clan in the village has an equal opportunity to lead, thus avoiding the dominance of one particular group that has the potential to trigger conflict or social division (Situmorang, 2019). With an inclusive and democratic mechanism, this tradition not only preserves cultural values, but also strengthens social solidarity as the main capital in community life. According

to Rahman & Susanto (2021), the application of the principle of common interest in customary traditions is one of the important factors in maintaining social stability and preventing discrimination between groups.

They emphasize that traditions that open up space for participation for all groups, including those with financial limitations or a small number of members, will be more effective in building social cohesion and encouraging community integration. This is clearly seen in the implementation of manjomput nasinurat, where all clans in Sabungan Nihuta V Village can play a role without discrimination, strengthening a sense of justice and togetherness. Therefore, this tradition is not just a traditional ritual, but a means to realize common interests which are the main foundation of harmonious and peaceful village social life.

This study concludes that the tradition of manjomput nasinurat in Sabungan Nihuta V Village has a very important role in maintaining the social life of the local community. First, deliberation is the main pillar in the implementation of this tradition, as a mandatory process before determining the date, candidates, place, and organizing committee. Second, this tradition reflects a high value of tolerance, which is able to maintain peace and prevent division in various aspects of life, such as customs, church, and daily work. Third, manjomput nasinurat is inclusive, embracing all groups without discrimination based on finances, education, or certain groups. Fourth, this tradition also strengthens solidarity through mutual cooperation in the thanksgiving event for the elected village head, as a form of community support and togetherness. Fifth, belief in God and luck is one of the main reasons for the sustainability of this tradition, where the election of the village head is considered divine will. Sixth, a firm commitment to ancestral principles is the key to the sustainability of traditions that contain positive values for the community. Finally, the main goal of this tradition is the common interest, ensuring that the village government is not controlled by certain groups or clans, but for the welfare of all residents of Sabungan Nihuta V Village.

Suggestion

Deliberation must be maintained and preserved as the main pillar in the implementation of this tradition so that the decision-making process continues to take place democratically and harmoniously. There needs to be consistent teaching of tolerance values to the younger generation so that this tradition can continue to run well and be continued into the future without experiencing changes in meaning or purpose. The procedures for implementing traditions that have been running well must be maintained, so that no personal or group interests arise that can disrupt the continuity of the tradition and the harmony of society. The value of mutual cooperation must continue to be maintained and applied in all aspects of the implementation of the tradition, as a form of solidarity and togetherness of the community. The belief that God is the one who chooses the winning candidate in this tradition must continue to be believed and upheld as part of the beliefs and spiritual values of the community. The commitment that has been built by ancestors since ancient times needs to be continuously reminded and maintained so that this tradition remains strong and has a positive meaning in community life. The main purpose of the manjomput nasinurat tradition, namely for the common good and avoiding the domination of certain groups, must always be the focus and maintained by all elements of the Sabungan Nihuta V Village community.

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