

The Patronage Leadership on Java: Is There a Toxic Leader?

By

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Abstract

A patronage and leadership are two things that are interrelated in the implementation of regional government including village government. This connection is felt even more closely when it is motivated by political and economic motivations that are wrapped in the power of a position. This paper aims to explain the relationship between patronage and leadership that encourages the birth of toxic leaders. The study revealed that the practice behind toxic leaders and their positive and negative aspects. The locus of the research is in Baderan Village, East Java, Indonesia. This study used a qualitative method with a case study approach (single case). Primary data (interviews and observations) are obtained from field studies, and secondary data (photos, government reports, archives) are obtained through literature studies. The data analysis technique used a case study design, that was "single case designs". The data were processed with the NVIVO 12 Plus data management tools. The study found that patronage and leadership in a village are inseparable. This is because political recruitment in the Village Head Election still adheres to a patronage system with a local term called "Breed". Positively, patronage can maintain the stability of power. Negatively, it creates toxic leaders who are closer to authoritarian. A toxic leader is found dressed in government positions and powers.

Keywords: patronage, toxic leader, public sector

Introduction

The study of leadership in Java has been carried out for a long time, more than twenty-five years ago. The sub-study includes development and demise, traditional leadership, an ideology of Javanese-Indonesian leadership, village leaders and new orders, village officials or *raja desa*, new order modernization and Islam, and whether Javanese people can do business. (Antlov, Hans; Cederroth, 2013) In his book, Antlov discusses a lot about the development of leaders in Java, including how to ascend to power, maintain power, and pass it on. Several sections address broader leadership issues, while the majority of the essays focus on rural areas. Antlov does not represent a single academic field but also includes historians, anthropologists, and economics. Since the book is the result of multi-disciplinary collaboration,

we expect that it will not only provide vital readings on contemporary local politics but also shed light on the past and outline probable future courses for Javanese society. Studies on leadership in Java, especially in rural areas, were not only carried out by Hans Antlov and friends, some of them were also conducted by Aspinall & As'Ad (2015), Aspinall, Sukmajati, & Fossati (2016), Aspinall & Rohman (2017), Aspinall, Rohman, Hamdi, Rubaidi, & Triantini, (2017), Abbas, et al. (2021). In addition, studies of leadership in the village concerning village development and village government are also carried out by Antlov & Eko (2012), Sutoro (2014), Wanusmawatie, Supriyono, Hakim, & Muluk (2017)

This study is very important to do to see the latest developments on how leadership always intersects with the patronage system in society (Aspinall et al., 2016; Douglas Mpondi, 2015; Hollibaugh, Horton, & Lewis, 2014; Khan, 2020; Mccauley, 2013; McCulloch, 2014; Munsen, 2005; Setijowati, 2018). Patronage is viewed as a distinct phenomenon that can be used to analyze and explain political, bureaucratic, and broader societal behavior. As such, it is frequently viewed as an impediment to (or a stopgap for) good administration; as a characteristic that is consistent with (and may benefit) democracy; and as conduct that is simply distinct from Weberian bureaucratic practice. (Hodder, 2015; Abdul Wahab et al, 2020). The patronage system will always be present and in various forms and models in various sectors of life in society (Wilson, 1961; Shefter, 1977; Frampton F. Fox, 2003; Rai, 2008; Jenkins & Eckert, 1986; Un, 2005; Snapp, 2009; Matti, 2010; Kemahlioglu, 2011; Cooksey, 2012; Levitsky & Way, 2012; Kenny, 2013; Chachavalpongpun, 2014; Hollibaugh, 2015; Douglas Mpondi, 2015; Kochanek, 2016; Osei, 2018; Khan, 2020). While studies on patronage in Indonesia have been carried out by Blunt, Turner, & Lindroth (2012), Simandjuntak (2012), Warren & Visser (2016), Diah (2017), and Alam& Sujarwoto (2017).

The link between leadership, patronage, and politics cannot be separated from the contortions of a decentralized system that provides both wide and narrow space for actors to run and maintain a patronage system as long as it is beneficial for themselves and their groups (Dufhues, Theesfeld, & Buchenrieder, 2015; Sadanandan, 2012; Yetty et al, 2021). The relationship between leadership, patronage, and politics that is facilitated by the decentralized system will allow for abuse of authority and various forms of corruption due to weak supervision (Simandjuntak, 2012; Arrasyid et al., 2019a; Arrasyid et al., 2019b; Tanjung Sutarna, Agus Margono, & Heruanto Hadna, 2021).

Milosevic, Maric, & Lončar (2020) stated that several toxic leadership models have been built, where the toxic relationship occurs between the leader and the people he leads. They construct a process model of toxic leadership and empirically show the toxic leadership process and its results based on the findings of a multiple-case study. Thus, they make two significant contortions to contemporary writing. First, they offer a theoretical model of the toxic leadership process that describes the goal and effects of toxic leadership in comparison to other dark leadership styles: destructive, abusive, and ineffectual. In doing so, they demonstrate that although the goal of toxic leaders is relatively benign, their actions may be detrimental to the institution. Specifically, they demonstrate that the major purpose of toxic leaders is to conceal a lack of relevant competence and preserve a position of control, to the exclusion of other organizationally relevant goals. To attain their goals, toxic leaders are engaged in upward and downward directed influence tactics that generate ambiguity and confusion, thereby increasing context toxicity and impeding the performance of others. Second, our data indicate that followers are more agentic than was previously believed. They demonstrate that followers not only opt to un-follow their toxic leaders but also actively attempt to neutralize their effect through workarounds and learning. Followers have been generally disregarded in the leadership literature, and as a result, their agency in leadership processes has been inadequately addressed.

This paper aims to determine whether the practice of the patronage system that occurs in Indonesia, especially in village government on the island of Java, can be classified as toxic leaders. This study is a continuation of several previous studies, one of which was conducted by (Robert, n.d.), who conducts studies on local governments in Central Java.

Research Methods

The study applied a qualitative case study in Baderan village, Ngawi district, East Java province, Indonesia. The data collection techniques carried out were obtained directly from the sources and critical informants through interview techniques (structured and unstructured), observation (direct and indirect), document analysis, and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The resource persons included the sub-district head, village head, chairman and members of the village consultative body, and community leaders (religious leaders, traditional leaders, and local intellectuals).

This study also used secondary data from the literature, documents, archives, activity reports, activity notes, and photos. The researcher obtained secondary data through observation techniques (direct, indirect, email, internet, and social media) and considered credible data.

The research process is as follows: the process of forming patronage in Baderan Village, Ngawi Regency, the causes of maintaining patronage even though the law always limits it, positive aspects of preserving patronage for patrons, clients, and the Baderan Village government, harmful elements of maintaining patronage, for patrons, clients, and Baderan Village government, and Efforts to complete patronage for a more democratic Baderan Village Government.

Results And Discussion

The Process of Establishing the Patronage System

The formation of a patronage system in village government is inseparable from the social structure that exists in various villages in Java. The life of rural people who are agrarian and have no desire to change their lives to become more industrialized causes rural communities in Java in general to have the principle of accepting fate and reality. This is certainly a great influence in their socio-political life which is more oriented towards practical views on how to live life from day to day peacefully and away from conflict. Accordingly, it led to the emergence of the main forces originating from the village elite, namely village government figures who are considered by the village community to have dominant social capital compared to other village community members. This is reflected in the social phenomenon of the emergence of a strong patronage system in Baderan Village, Ngawi Regency, East Java throughout the history of Baderan Village Government. Something similar to what was conveyed by Bebbington, Dharmawan, Fahmi, & Guggenheim (2004) that local governance structures frequently reflect culturally charged power struggles and culturally motivated ambitions to attain power. The astounding expansion of private groups and their infiltration into village society has been a significant political phenomenon in post-war Java. Apart from the chain of pair ties among kin and neighbors, cooperative economic and political actions in Central Java can only be performed within an organizational framework with a formal leadership structure. There are no informal groups for such objectives. As a result, the local government had almost monopolized the ability to initiate such action in the past (Rahayuningsih et al., 2019). Nonetheless, after the nation's independence, private organizations within the urban communities, particularly political organizations, began to

organize in the villages. They have been met with a mixed reception. On the one hand, the villages admire the "advanced" quality of these metropolitan exports, and their local leaders earn a reputation. On the other hand, they dislike how these organizations perturb the village's sense of unity. (Robert, n.d.)

Several things that encourage the formation of patronage include village head election conflicts, village government conflicts, main informant's leadership, the history of Baderan Village, patronage, and the vacancy of potential leaders.

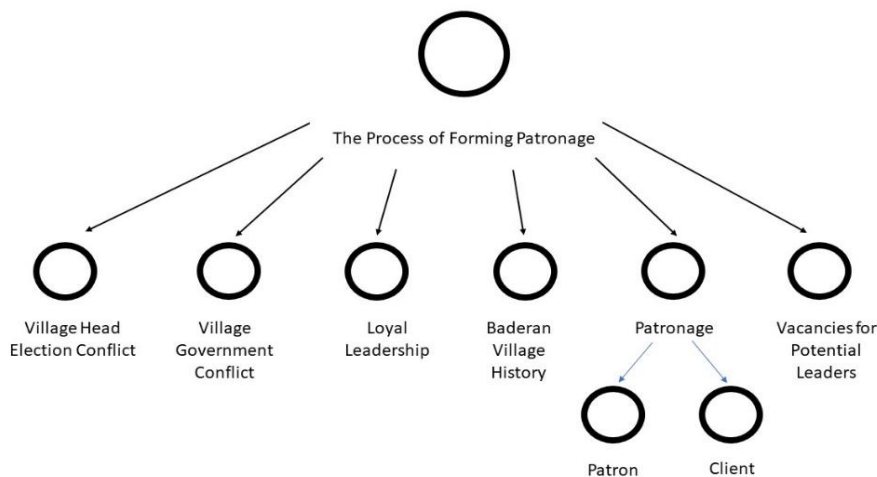


Figure 1. The process of forming patronage in Baderan Village

The picture above shows several factors that play a part in the formation of patronage, as political forces are usually represented by the village government elites, including village head election conflicts, village government conflicts, loyal leadership, village history, patronage, and vacancies for village head candidates. The vacancy of potential village head candidates is shown by the phenomenon of simultaneous village head elections in June 2019, out of 457 village head candidates who bet, 55 village head candidates have husband and wife status. (Hakimi, 2019).

The leadership of one of the candidates for the Head of Baderan Village named Main Informants one of the factors causing the emergence of patronage in Baderan Village because of his kinship with informant response (R1's brother) who was the longest-serving village head in Baderan. According to informant response (R18), one of the members of the Village Consultative Body Baderan, until the village head election approaches, Main Informant's leadership is yet to be seen. R18 believes that Main Informant cannot blend in with the people of Baderan Village. People know that he is from the R1 family, a former village head who was very influential in Baderan Village.

The village government conflict that arose was caused by a corruption case carried out by informant response (R2), the Head of Baderan Village for the 2013-2019 period. The people of Baderan Village, who are supported by R1, demanded that R2 be immediately dismissed as the Head of Baderan Village. The protracted village government conflict in Baderan has also triggered the emergence of patronage. Baderan Village experienced a vacancy for the Village Head which was deactivated on August 17, 2016. Baderan Village was once led by two Village Heads, namely informant (R3) who only served for less than a year. He was then replaced by informant (R14), who continued until the elected Village Head was inaugurated on October 17,

2019. While on duty as Baderan Village Head, R3 was often harassed by R1, one of the most influential people in Baderan Village, known to be wealthy and had served as Head of Baderan Village for a long time. He very often criticized R3's work from government affairs to family matters. According to R3, the motive for the pressures directed at him was not because of economic motive, but a personal grudge against the backdrop of power. The R1 family group did not want the Village Head from outside Baderan Village.

The conflict in the election of the Head of Baderan Village was also a factor in the emergence of patronage in Baderan Village. In 2017, after serving a sentence of 9 months in prison, R2's desire to run 2017 Baderan's regional head election further sharpened the competition between community groups in Baderan Village. There were at least two competing community groups at that time, namely the community group that wanted R2 to become the village head of Baderan and the community group that did not want the power to fall into R2's hands. This second group includes Main Informant, a candidate for village head, as well as R1 and his traditional supporters. The conflict in the election of the head of Baderan Village greatly occupied the attention of the government and the Ngawi community because it was colored by the upheaval of the Baderan Village social community. R2 and his supporters carried out several demonstrations to be accepted as one of the candidates for the Baderan Village Head for the 2017-2023 period. (Kiri, 2019; Pranoto, 2017a) R2 and his supporters continued their demonstrations so that the Ngawi Regency Government obeyed and implemented the Surabaya Administrative Court Decision which had been postponed in 2017 during the Baderan Village head election. (Pranoto, 2017b) Then again R2 and his supporters continued their demonstrations demanding the resignation of informant (R19) as Chairman of the BPD who was also considered legally unfit to serve because his debts in a financial institution had not been resolved. (Madiun, 2017).

The very strong and inherent classic patronage in Baderan Village was R1, due to his great influence as the former Head of Baderan Village (1999-2013). Even though no longer in office, through his messengers R1 could influence the community not to be content with the village head who is in office; and criticized every policy of the Baderan Village Head that is deemed inappropriate; moreover, if the incumbent Village Head is alleged to have committed corruption or power abuse. Additionally, R1 always wanted Baderan Village to be led by indigenous inhabitants of Baderan, not someone from outside the village. His displeasure was shown when R3, the village outsider, served as the Village Head. He always harassed and looked for flaws in R3's work, disturbing the peace of R3's family to immediately stop R3 from serving as the Acting Head of Baderan Village. The incidents in Baderan Village are part of the local village government dynamics. However, this situation clearly shows that the formal rules of the game such as regional regulations and legislation are merely decorations and is not strongly applied to regulate the village governance. It seems that the state is powerless in the village as if the village is a "country in the village". There is an assumption that the state does have rules but there are different ways to apply them. (Antlov, 2002) Since political elites and village government figures have significant social capital or land ownership, they become a strong type of material force. After all, they can provide rights such as monopolies. (McCulloch, 2014)

Causes of Maintaining the Patronage System

So far, there are two reasons for the maintenance of patronage in Baderan Village, namely R1's leadership and R2's leadership. This is a portrait of competition at the local level between the political elite of the Baderan village government. R1 as the former village head and R2 as the successor to the leadership of the current Baderan Village Head.

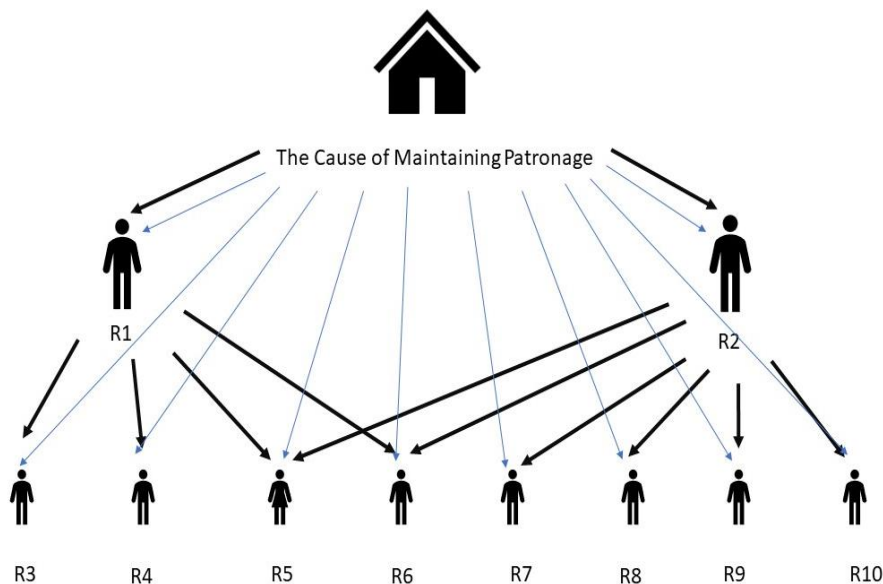


Figure 2. The Cause of maintaining patronage in Baderan Village

The picture above shows that the 2 (two) polarizations, namely the poles of R1's leadership and R2's leadership were equally strong and had become political rivalries in Baderan Village. The magnitude influence of R1's leadership was stated by R3, R4, R5, and R6, while the magnitude influence of R2's leadership was stated by R7, R8, R9, and R10. R1, who was 60 years old in 2019, has served as the Head of Baderan Village for 7 (seven) periods. At the time of the village head election, R1 always emphasized that the turnout should be 100%. When the electors did not reach 100%, R1 was angry and marginalized those who did not vote for him. According to R3, who once served as the Acting Head of Baderan Village, R1's desire to remain powerful and influential in Baderan was very great. There seems to be a hereditary family interest that must be maintained. They don't want the Baderan Village Government to be held by someone outside the village. Although R2 is a native of Baderan Village, he still becomes R1's target. He thought R2 has a conflicting opinion with him; therefore, he always monitored R2's movements. As a climax R1's supporters pushed R2 back when he was involved in a village fund corruption case.

During his leadership, R2 is known to be close to the community. He is known to be generous with the community or to anyone who knows him. R2 did not hesitate to go to the residents' homes to ask for support during the village head election. However, according to informant (R9), R2 is a person who is unpredictable and likes to work on his own and doesn't want to follow the rules. In addition, in every policy he takes, R2 likes to use Ngawi's Regent's name; as if the Regent is always supporting him. It is very interesting to discuss the phenomena of R1 and R2's study cases. It is very interesting to discuss the phenomena of R1 and R2's study case; in which there are informal figures who always become rivals of the formal figures in power. It is also one of the actual phenomena up to this day that there is a "country within the village" as conveyed by Antlöv (2003).

Negative and Positive Impacts of the Patronage System

The patronage system has negative and positive impacts on the administration of village governance. As shown below, several aspects are negatively affected by the patronage system, among others are transparency of power domination, corruption, and dependency between individuals and groups.

The low transparency aspect was conveyed by informants (R12, R14, and R6). The aspect of power domination was stated by informans (R16, and R9). The corruption aspect was stated by informants (R7, R3, R2, R11, R4, and R3). The aspect of dependency between individuals and groups was stated by informants (R2 and R12).

When power domination arises, what is wrong or right done by the leadership, must be considered correct and must be followed by the subordinates. Patronage is indeed needed in a portion that is sufficient to ensure the continuity of the government, but R13 stated that if it is excessive and too civilizing to someone then what happens is not good. Power domination performed by the local rulers or officials often gives rise to authority abuse, even though the rule applies nationally but if the local officials don't want to implement it then the rules are just meaningless. Patronage also causes dependency between individuals and groups; subordinates are afraid to do something or make good initiatives for fear of being wrong. What happens next is that subordinates always wait for superiors' orders to do something. This is a dependency example as described by R12. The Javanese call it "*pakewuh*" which is a sense of carelessness and fear of preceding the leadership's will. In addition, R9, Chairman of the Village Consultative Body (called BPD), also explained that the dependency between individuals and groups is caused by intimidation acts from influential figures or people in small communities who do not have power. This is due to the villagers' tendency for having no principles and are easy to be scared away from. So, when there is a community leader who is in power and wants to run for village head; then people outside the "Breed" of the ruler will not dare to run for office. Low transparency in the implementation of village government is one of the negative impacts that will be attached to follow other negative aspects. When a village head figure acts dominantly, all his affairs are not easily known by other village officials. There are more people outside the village apparatus for fear of questioning and clarifying the discrepancies that are found or felt by the community.

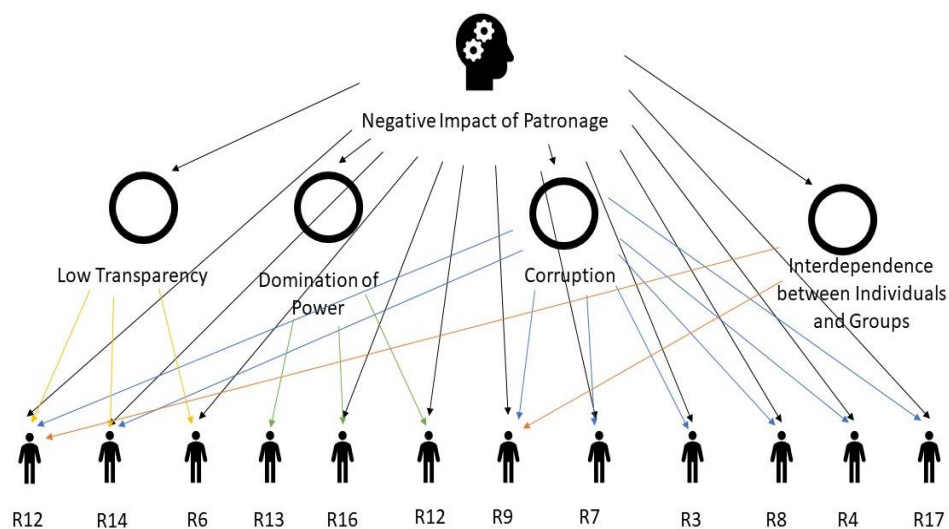


Figure 3 The negative impact of patronage in Baderan village

Corruption is the estuary of the negative impact of the patronage system as carried out by R2, the Head of Baderan Village who has only run his government in the second year, namely in 2014. He was caught in a corruption case involving land compensation for the construction of a toll road in Ngawi Regency. R2, who is known as a generous leader and likes to help the community, turns out that in government practice he is very dominant in power, very low in transparency, and makes his village apparatus always dependent on him.

In addition to the negative impact of the patronage system, it also has a positive impact if it is applied in sufficient portions. It is a form of post-socialist democratization, the sustainability of agenda strength, policy preferences, and the achievement of government goals. The sustainability aspect was stated by R14 (Baderan Village Head Official), the policy preference aspect was stated by R10 (BPD member), and the achievement aspect was confirmed by R6 (BPD member).

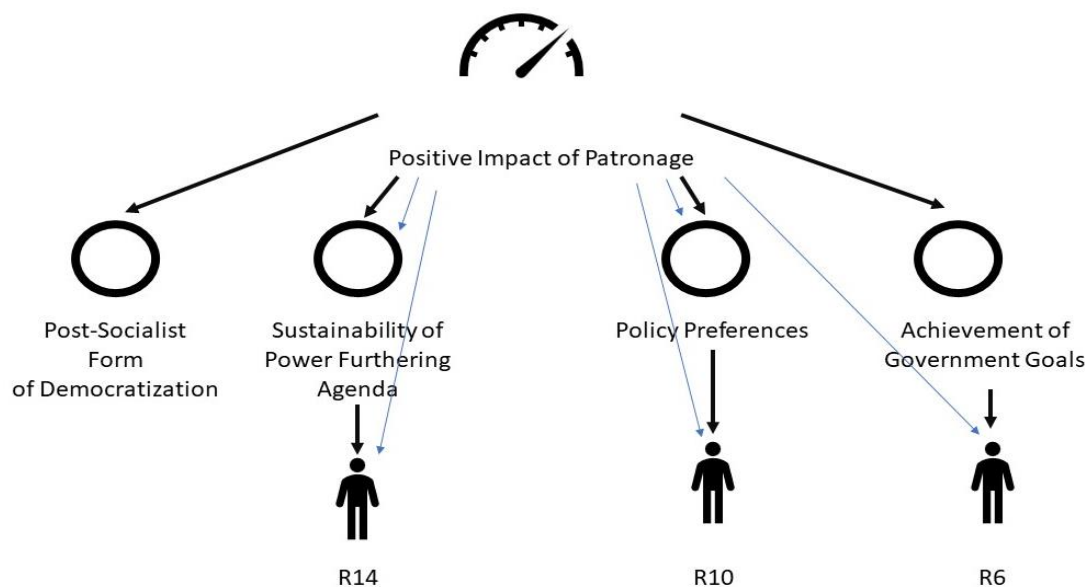


Figure 4 The Positive impact of Patronage in Baderan village

The patronage system is indeed needed to support the continuity of power and achieve future agendas. Without loyal supporters, a leader will be weak because he is too easy to be disturbed by parties who are not in line with him. R3, for example, had served as the Acting Head of Baderan Village but because he was not from Baderan Village and certainly he did not have sufficient social capital; therefore, he is very susceptible to being shaken from his position. Unlike R14, who continued R3's position as Village Head, was ruling for a longer time, namely from 2016 until the election of a new village head, namely in October 2019. As a native of Baderan Village and who started his career as a village official in Baderan; people such as R1 who usually oppose the Baderan Village Government do not bother him much. Sustainability of power and the achievement of future agendas also apply to R2 where he can regain his power in the 2019 village head election for the second time. This is inseparable from his supporters who remain loyal to him. People still believe R2, despite his guilt in a corruption case, and served 9 months in prison. It is undeniable that to reclaim his power, R2 often carries out social movements involving part of the Baderan Village community as well as people from outside Baderan. So, there are either more or fewer people who fear him.

The aspect of policy preference has a positive impact on patronage, as well. This means, that potential barriers to policy implementation are considered great, thus, a leader needs to build a patronage system. In Indonesia, we often hear the term coalition. This is done to ensure the continuity of the government and prevent failure. This is what happened in Baderan Village, namely, R2 was able to maintain the patronage he had built when he first took office in 2013. Therefore, it is not surprising that when he failed in 2017 and was continued in the 2019 Village head election, R2 finally succeeded in returning to his position as Head of Baderan Village. The achievement of government goals in various activities such as community development and empowerment will be helped if the existing patronage system runs well, in supporting the

village government policies and programs. The implementation of village government cannot be separated from the participation of all elements of society. (Beer, 2014; Blunt et al., 2012; Sabet & Khaksar, 2020)

Attempt to Resolve the Patronage System

Efforts to prevent the negative impact of the patronage system have been carried out by the central government by providing space for candidates for village heads who come from outside the village, based on the decision of the Constitutional Court. Indeed, Article 33 letter g of Law No. 6 of 2014 Concerning Villages (the "Village Law") simply outlines the domicile requirements for potential village heads, namely that they must be residents of the village in question. This provision was subsequently repealed by the Constitutional Court. In a later ruling numbered 128/PUU-XIII/2015, the Constitutional Court ruled that Article 33 letter g of the Village Law contradicted the 1945 Constitution and "had no binding legal force." In the article Domicile Requirements for Candidates for Village Heads that Violate the Constitution, the Court examines the direct election of village heads by the village community and the appointment of village officials without requiring that they be domiciled in the local village, following the spirit of Article 28C paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution. This regulation declares, "Everyone has the right to advocate for his rights collectively to strengthen his neighborhood, nation, and country." Additionally, the Constitutional Court ruled that the selection of "village heads and village officials" should not be restricted by requiring them to be "registered as residents and live in the local village for at least one year before registration." (Pramesti, 2017).

Even though the constitution has provided space for anyone to nominate a village head, the candidate for Baderan village head is still not taken from outside. R15 (Head of Legal Section) of the Ngawi Regency Regional Secretariat stated that candidates for village heads from outside will consider the political forces that have been built in the village. Except if the candidate from outside is just used as a "dark horse" to split votes or merely to fulfill the requirements so that the village head single candidate does not fight the "empty ridge". As stipulated in the Ngawi Regency Regional Regulation Number 10 of 2016, Ngawi Regent Regulation Number 22 of 2017, and Regional Regulation Number 31 of 2017 which do not permit single candidates or empty boxes in village head elections.

The Emergence of a Toxic Leader

The researchers obtained empirical findings of toxic leaders in Baderan Village from two main characters who stood out throughout the field study, namely R1 and R2. As the former Village Head, R1 has always been toxic to the community by interfering directly or indirectly with the administration of Baderan Village government. R1 will look for the faults of the village head in power, as a weapon or tool to overthrow him. In addition, R1 is also an anti-village head for those who are not native to Baderan Village, even though that person only serves as a temporary village head.

R2 is also toxic to society, by pretending to be kind, generous, and helping the community; in reality, in terms of government affairs, he is very dominant, not transparent, and tends to work on his own accord. R2 knows how to win people's hearts so that people will depend on him. Due to his actions, he is easily caught up in acts of corruption. The community does not dare to reprimand or remind R2 if he blatantly makes a mistake. Even though it was proven that R2 was declared corrupt, the community still allowed him to run for village head. It turns out that he was re-elected for the second time as the Head of Baderan Village for the 2019-2025 period.

Conclusion

The study attempts to answer whether the existing patronage system in Java creates toxic leaders, especially village government leaders. It can be concluded that the patronage system that emerged and was maintained in the village had more negative impacts than positive impacts. The longer the patronage system is maintained, the smaller the space for a healthy democracy in the administration of village governance will be. In this way, the traditional patronage power that is maintained is increasingly fertile; while for village and community leaders, it becomes poison. The crucial thing that also confirms the previous expert's findings is the opinion that "there is a state in the village" is still the case today. The applicable laws and regulations have not yet been fully implemented, since it is hampered by the strong patronage system in the village.

This study still has many weaknesses even though it is obtained based on empirical data. The main drawbacks are in determining the sample size and digging deeper for information from the key figures such as R1 and R2. It is hoped that future research can further deepen the key aspects of the patronage system and governance leadership in the village area. In addition, a review from the state administrative law perspective is very much needed as well to maintain the law and regulation enforcements in the village.

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