



The Strength of Incumbent Political Symbolism at the Simular Elections of Seram Regency, East Part of Maluku Province 2020



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Abstract

This paper aimed to identify and describe the power of incumbent political symbolism in the simultaneous regional elections of East Seram Regency, Maluku Province. Three candidate pairs followed this election: Alkatiri-Arobi Kelian, Rohani Vanath-Ramli Mahu, and Mukti Keliobas (Incumbent) Idris Rumalutur. Observation results show that the incumbent's political opponent, Rohani Vanath, who is the wife of Abdullah Vanath (former Regent, SBT), is considered to strengthen the politics of political dynasties, where political battles are dominated by coalitions of predatory interests and encourage the marginalization of people's power, as emphasized in Yuki's conceptualization. Fukuoka.

Keywords

*incumbent;
local politics;
local symbol strength;
political symbolism;
simular elections;*

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1 Introduction

Simultaneous Pilkada has been in Indonesia since 2015, 2017, and 2018, and in 2020, Indonesia again held simultaneous Pilkada, which was attended by 270 regions consisting of 9 provinces, 224 regencies, and 37 cities. The simultaneous local elections were postponed, which should have been held in September 2020 due to global conditions due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The General Elections Commission then announced the postponement letter number 179/PL.02-KPT/01/GEC/111/2020, dated March 21, 2020, regarding the Postponement of Stages Election of Governor and Deputy Governor, Regent and Deputy Regent, and Mayor and Deputy Mayor in 2020 in Efforts to Prevent the Spread of Covid-19.

The Regional Head Election in the East Seram Regency shows a round. The new leadership regeneration was in line with the completion of a grand event at the local level at the simultaneous local elections on December 9, 2020. The political temperature at the local level at that time felt so stinging in the public sphere. Even buzzers, success teams, and the like argue with each other, bully, insinuate and even market their figures through the media, socialization between villages to clashing interests down to the village level. FAHAM, Adil, and NINA RAMAH are three pairing jargons that have never disappeared from the public spotlight in East Seram Regency.

If we reread the Pilkada of East Seram Regency, each election period has its review, including the patterns and dynamics surrounding it. Our political reading will rely on figures holistically capable of displaying symbols of local wisdom so that the party's influence is considered less dominant than the influence of figures in the local domain. Academically, this stigma requires scientific proof, so local political symbols with a character orientation will appear and even have a powerful influence compared to the influence of the power of political parties. One interesting example that has always been the attention of the SBT public is the birth of an independent path later determined by the GEC as a participant in the SBT Pilkada on December 9, 2020. As reviewed by Abdul Samad Arey, one of the critical notes in the 2020 SBT Pilkada, we give one indicator that the shadows are many. That figure is still strong in the SBT Pilkada, namely the pair's escape in the independent route Rohani Vanath – Ramli Mahu (NINA FRIENDLY). This couple does not just show up. This pair escaped on a steep and winding path because of the influence of Abdullah Vanath's figure. For these two periods, the former Regent of SBT must be admitted that he is still a 'magnet' in every local political momentum in SBT. What is the reason? It is suspected that the legacy of leadership for two periods is the reason for forming a vital figure in the SBT public (Smith, 1998; Bondi, 1987; Hadi et al., 2018; Yusiawati & Marhaeni, 2020).

This paper is directed to answer various political findings in the 2020 Pilkada where the author deliberately took the locus of study in the Eastern Seram Regency of Maluku Province because the incumbent went smoothly in winning the battle in the December 9, 2020 election. Several theories that strongly support this article include Migdal (2001), (the) refers to the emergence of local strongmen, one of the sources of power they have is the wealth owned by their leaders as landlords or rich people. Migdal tries to explain about local strongmen who succeeded in exercising social control. In this context, Migdal says: "... They have succeeded in placing themselves or placing their family members in several important positions to ensure that the allocation of resources goes according to their own rules rather than according to the rules outlined in official rhetoric, policy statements, and laws and regulations. Made in the capital city or issued by a strong enforcer of regulations".

Local Strong People (LSP) are identified as part of "local bossism" as a strategy to maintain domination of power or vice versa. This condition depends on whether local bosses are affiliated with incumbent candidates or newcomers in the polka. Muhtar's writing in the study of Political Party Oligarchy in the Pilkada published by IPD 2020 explained that to maintain economic dominance and political dominance, among others, (1) Placing relatives and cronies as mayors, deputy mayors, and members of regional legislatures; (2) Establishing a political machine as a vote broker; (3) Regulating the placement of regional officials; (4) Regulating government projects and aspiration funds; (5) Regulating regional regulations; (6) Regulating tax relief; (7) Regulating loans from Regional Development Banks; (8) Granting mining, forestry, and plantation concessions and contracts; (9) Intimidation and political violence; (10) Implement an iron fist policy to

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resolve land conflicts and weaken trade unions. In addition to collecting money for state resources, local bosses also carry out illegal economic activities such as gambling, smuggling, logging, etc (Arriane, 2017; Chari & Gupta, 2008; Woods, 1998).

Local Strong People (LSP) is one of the political symbols at the local level. These symbols are local in Maluku, especially in the Eastern Seram Regency. They are Soa (marga) and raja (local boss) are suspected of having a strong influence in labeling symbols of local politics in winning every democratic celebration at the village level (Pilkades), district (Pilbup), and provincial (Pilgub) levels. The following table clearly describes a group of people in power in every celebration of democracy.

Table 1
The powerful group in every democratic celebration of East Seram Regency

NO	Power Group	Characteristics	Examples of influence in elections
1	Local Strong Man (Traditional figures, religious leaders, associations, youth leaders, and village thugs who have political affiliation with specific candidates)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Has a strategic position to influence the voting community There is recognition from the local community about Running dynastic relations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Influencing specific figures as candidates for Regent Giving political recognition to the power of specific figures Forcing certain parties to be affiliated with local dynasties
2	Party Boss	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The results of the affair between the businessman (economist) and the party chairman Conducting financing for a series of political processes Having a political network down to the branch level 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Determining Party Decisions and recommendations Facilitating specific candidates to be elected as Regent/Governor Strengthening the network down to the grassroots
3	dynasty/kinship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership successor Certain clans that have influence Political leadership domination 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The leading Candidate has the same bloodline Has a strong influence on the clan (certain descendants) Expanding the influence of power with dynastic alliances.
4	Traditional based rulers (Raja, Chief Soa, Chief Saniri, Kwang)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Influencing in determining political decisions at the village level Having influence on political parties in carrying out political recruitment at the local level Influencing the village level, including political affairs (political direction and support) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening the basis for politicizing adat at the local level Local political symbols with political influence Strengthening political dynasties at the local level, including support and loyalty to the king at every election moment

Tables from various sources. It was analyzed and interpreted according to research interests.

The Jakarta election contest, some time ago, reminded us of the use of political symbols from aspects of religion, ethnicity, etc., so that the nuances of pluralism are refuted by theories of pluralism in the implementation of regional elections. Differences in ethnicity, and religion, later led Anis Baswedan to become the elected government after the second round. This victory is standard in every political battle at the local election level that prioritizes identity politics. Religious symbols become a solid foundation to break the argument about the power of the incumbent Basuki Cahaya Purnama. The dichotomy by using local symbols

in the Pilkada of East Seram Regency, such as 'indigenous people' and non-natives (we are natives of East Seram), the descendants of the king are political symbols behind the power to convince rational voters and traditional voters. Propaganda of identity symbols is getting stronger ahead of the 2020 simultaneous elections.

In the academic tradition that introduced symbolic interactionism in the early 20th century, John Dewey and William James (Yuwita et al., 2019). Pragmatic scientists believe that reality is dynamic (West & Turner, 2014). According to Littlejohn, symbolic interaction theory or symbolic interaction theory is often grouped into two schools, namely the Iowa school led by Manford Kuhn and Carl and the Chicago School led by Herbert Blumer. According to West & Turner (2014), most of the principles of symbolic interaction and its development are rooted in The Chicago School. The scientific approach of the Chicago School emphasizes biographies, case studies, diaries, autobiographies, letters, indirect interviews, and unstructured interviews.

According to Ralph LaRossa and Donald C. Reitzes that the assumptions underlying symbolic interactionism show three major themes, namely: (1) the importance of meaning for human behavior, (2) the importance of the concept of self, (3) the relationship between the individual and society (West & Turner, 2014). According to Mulyana (2001), the essence of symbolic interaction is an activity characteristic of humans, namely communication or the exchange of symbols that are given meaning. The symbolic interaction perspective is under a more extensive perspective, often called a phenomenological or interpretive perspective (Mulyana, 2001).

Research on symbolic interaction theory has been carried out by Yuwita et al. (2019), on religious pluralism in Islamic boarding schools with a symbolic interaction theory approach which results that God makes His creations of different religions, namely: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism to be able to interact with each other. Learn various ways such as religious tolerance, social life, helping each other, and acknowledging differences as a gift given by Him as a reality of life. The implementation of inter-religious interaction is carried out by holding cooperation in the socio-religious field. In addition, research on symbolic interaction theory has also been carried out by Luthfie et al. (2017), about "symbolic interaction of community organizations in village development," which results in that symbolic interactions carried out through interpersonal communication, dialogical communication, group communication can create consensus and can reduce conflict, so that it can become a pioneer in rural development.

An analogy of how symbols are used for the sake of the image and reputation of individuals in the Pilkada, as said by George Herbert Mead, noted: "The way man perceives the world and himself is closely related to his society. Mead sees the mind (mind) and self (self) as part of human behavior, namely, their interactions with other people. According to Mead: "Before a person acts, he imagines himself in someone else's shoes with the expectations of others and tries to understand what that person expects. Perhaps because of that, most regional heads try to dramatize the symbols they wear as local strongmen.

In the perspective of dramaturgy Goffman (1959, 1963, 1967), in the theory of symbolic interaction from George Herbert Mead, states that (1) Humans learn to play various roles and assume identities that are relevant to these roles, showing each other who and what. Moreover, define the situations they enter into and their behaviors in the context of their social identity, meaning, and definition of the situation. (2) When humans interact with each other, he wants to manage the impression he hopes to grow on other people towards him. For this reason, everyone performs a "show" for others; life is like a theater, and actors are the players (Mulyana, 2001). This analysis refers to the symbols of how the figures in the Pilkada conduct political interactions, both related to local languages, and traditional identities and in the capacity of the Candidate as an incumbent in the regional head election.

Based on the explanation above, the writer suspects that the power of the symbol of the king in the post-conflict local election politics will continue to increase throughout the post-conflict local election. This paper attempts to dissect the above symptoms by analyzing the Symbolic Interactionism perspective. For the sake of systematic discussion, the author raises two problems. First, what is the political reality of the simultaneous election of the Regent of East Seram in 2020? This section takes pictures of the eligible participants and the election results. Second, how does the symbol of the king work in the election of the Regent of East Seram? This section discusses the comparison of the strength of party support and the king's symbol as a figure as well as a very influential local figure, the operation of the king's symbol in human action, and the influence of

the king's symbol on the victory of the candidate pair (Matthews & Richter, 1991; Yeung, 2000; de Bercegol & Monstadt, 2018).

Literature review

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism was born from the American psychological tradition such as William James, James Mark Baldwin, and John Dewey, which influenced the sociologist Charles H. Cooley who later helped the development of Social psychology theory in American sociology. According to Cooley's dictum, humans' imagination is a fact of a stable society and functions as a legacy of the reality of the subjective world. William Isaac Thomas, Cooley's contemporaries, emphasized the need to study subjective facts, but that did not mean that objective facts should be ignored. Social psychology must be aware of both dimensions of reality this (Charles Horton, tth).

Symbolic interactionism, in principle, seeks to understand human behavior from the subject's point of view, and it provides a theoretical perspective with the basic assumption that subjects act based on the meanings they have, and these meanings arise in the process of social interaction between themselves (between the actors). George Herbert Mead, who became known as the early originator of this theory, greatly admired the actor's ability to use symbols; he stated that the actor acted on the meaning of symbols that appeared in certain situations. The meaning of the symbol, in turn, forms the essence of symbolic interactionism, which emphasizes the correlation between symbols and interactions (Umiarso & Elbadiansyah, 2014).

Variants and essential elements of symbolic interactionism are adopted from the thoughts and views of George Herbert Mead. Meanwhile, the figure who collected their thoughts and views of Mead was his student, Herbert Blumer. In his hands, symbolic interactionism was formulated entirely and integrally (Elbadiansyah, the). Symbolic interactionists, who elaborate on the view that the self is *a social* actor, argue that roles "can be negotiated" or defined collectively. This explanation is based on five assumptions built as follows; (Elbadiansyah, tth)

- a) Assumption 1, humans live in an environment of symbols.
- b) Assumption 2, through symbols, humans can stimulate other people in ways that may differ from the stimuli they receive from others.
- c) Assumption 3, through the communication of symbols, can learn many meanings and values and therefore can learn the ways of action of others. Society, through its culture, provides a standard set of meanings for certain symbols. This condition is for ongoing interaction. If the same is unavailable, society will be divided into *chaos* and disband.
- d) Assumption 4, Symbols, meanings, and values associated with them are not only thought of by them in separate parts. However, always in the form of groups that are sometimes broad and complex. This means that there are group units that have the same symbols same.
- e) Assumption 5, Think is something process of searching for symbolic possibilities and studying future actions, assessing the relative advantages and disadvantages according to individual judgments, one of which is conducted.

Of the five assumptions, there are the basic principles of symbolic interactionism, namely (Elbadiansyah, the):

- a) Humans can think that it is formed by interaction social.
- b) Humans learn about meaning and symbols through social interaction.
- c) Humans can change the meanings and symbols they use in interaction by interpreting the situation of those surrounding them.

Based on the explanation above, symbolic interactionism theory is one of the theories included in the social definition paradigm. If the genealogy traces, this theory is strongly influenced by the philosophical thinking of pragmatism. George Herbert Mead first put forward this theory in Chicago (Umiarso & Elbadiansyah, 2014). At the beginning of its development, the symbolic interactionism theory focused its studies on human

interpersonal behavior. This theory does not examine behavior at the macro level, so scientists call it symbolic interactionism with the wing of micro-sociology. However, in subsequent developments, this theory examines the behavior of society as a whole. Symbolic interactionism theory is often referred to as micro-sociological and macro-sociological.

From the symbolic perspective, it is very clear about social actions to understand the meaning of these actions. This perspective believes that human actions are meaningful. Action functions after its meaning are interpreted by the person or group of people who interact. Briefly, George Ritzer & Douglas J. Goodman explain George Harbert Mead's view of the stages of human action as follows:

- a) The impulse stage, namely the human reaction to stimuli (stimuli), for example, hunger will increase when humans see food. So the available food is a stimulus that evokes an impulse.
- b) The perception stage is the human reaction to impulse-driven stimuli. When humans are hungry and suddenly see food, humans will react. Human reactions can vary; for example, immediately take the food, or try to hold back hunger while waiting for someone he respects to take the food first. Mead said humans are constructed by many sources, such as religion, economy, culture, law, etc.
- c) Manipulation stage, humans take actions related to objects. However, the actions humans choose are not spontaneous because, according to Mead, this stage is a period of pause that shapes the human mind to take action. Furthermore, Mead says, past experiences influence human understanding in that interlude.

In the consumption stage, namely the implementation stage, humans take action. Mead said that at this stage, humans take action driven by the motivation to satisfy their hearts. And when taking action, humans have calculated the implications first (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).

2 Materials and Methods

Research design

This research will use a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method. The descriptive method was used to facilitate researchers in describing the conditions for the election of the Regent/Deputy Regent of West Seram Regency, Maluku Province. The first process in the descriptive method is a discovery that is a finding of modest facts.

Research sites

This research is centered in the capital city of East Seram Regency, Maluku Province, in the 2020 simultaneous regional elections.

Data collection techniques

Researchers collected field data through several techniques, including interviews with informants, to gather political information about the strength of local political symbols carried out before and during the regional elections in 2020. The following stages are through observation or direct observation by researchers on conditions both at the Pilkada stage and after the election stage. Furthermore, the last data collection was through a documentation study related to the research theme. The researcher carried out a series of online and offline research documentation using the network to obtain information directly related to the research theme.

Research informants

The informants in this study included: local elites, political party elites, figures (candidates for regent/deputy regent) of Eastern Seram Regency for the 2020-2025 period, local kings, religious leaders, traditional leaders, Muhtar, M., Setiyono, B., Fitriyah, F., & Sardini, N. H. (2022). The strength of incumbent political symbolism at the simular elections of Seram Regency, east part of Maluku Province 2020. International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 6(3), 190–200. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijssh.v6n3.13094>

local thugs, and Pattimura University students who came from East Seram Regency which has the right to vote in local elections.

Data analysis

When the researcher finished doing the research, the data analysis results were analyzed and poured into a report. The findings for conducting data analysis aim to find data that still needs to be searched and how to get the new information, as well as as soon as possible to correct errors made whether the data is following research needs.

3 Results and Discussions

Pre-election of East Seram Regency

On August 20, 2020, Candidate for deputy regent Idris Rumalutur, who at that time received recommendations from several parties in Jakarta, the MK-IR winning team looked at the democratic process in East Seram (SBT) at that time; this team was very confident and believed in a win this democratic process quickly and smoothly. The MK-IR winning team at that time had already pocketed three recommendations from the GOLKAR, PKPI, and PAN parties, and the recommendations that would follow were NASDEM and PKB. It was confident that the MK-IR would pocket five party recommendations. These five parties also have seats that are not inferior to other competitors, namely, Golkar with three seats, PKPI with two seats, PAN with three seats, Nasdem with two seats, and PKB with one seat. With this amount, it is considered electoral capital (<https://www.malukunews.co>).

In subsequent developments, political dynamics and then the political map changed because the KPU accommodated independent candidates; the MK-IR Team concluded that victory was in sight without prioritizing the will of the Almighty. The results of a survey conducted by an NGO, Senergi Indonesia, showed that the electability level of MK-IR was very high. This means that the confidence to win in the election is very high. The winning team of MK-IR said that when Mukti Keliobas returned to lead the East Seram Regency (SBT), he would continue various unfinished work programs. The MK-IR winning team invited the Basudara people to Papua, Ambon, wherever they were. Let us come to the East Seram Regency (SBT) to give the feel of a safe and peaceful democracy. Going to a better Eastern Seram district (SBT) because we are Basudara people (<https://www.malukunews.co>).

The KPU then determined the pair of Fahri Husni Alkatiri with his deputy Robi Kilian, Mukti Keliobas, Idris Rumalutur, and the independent pair Rohani Vanath and Muhammad Ramli Mahu. The presence of these three pairs of candidates is indeed quite interesting to observe. Especially with the split of the Mukti Keliobas - Fachri Husni Alkatiri (Mufakat) pair who led in the 2015-2020 period will bring a more complicated analysis. Since the Eastern Seram KPU (SBT) has determined three new pairs to compete in the SBT Pilkada, this indicates that three major powers will compete in the political battle arena at the local level on December 9, 2020. These three candidates will be discussed in the following presentation, namely Fachri Husni Alkatiri-Arobi Kelian (Faham), Rohani Vanath-Ramli Mahu (Nina Friendly), and Mukti Keliobas-Idris Rumalutur (Adil).

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the symbol of the strength of each Candidate can be assumed that the Incumbent Candidate, Mukti Keliobas, has a social basis and is the king of Amarsekaru, which is undoubtedly a powerful political and cultural symbol. In contrast, Fahri Husni Alkatiri, also an incumbent candidate as deputy regent, actively supports a symbol of change by relying on floating masses who tend to carry no longer and even boast of an active regent. Meanwhile, the independent Candidate Rohani Vanath still uses cultural and political symbols inherited from Abdullah Vanath, Regent, for two periods ([Sjahrir et al., 2014](#); [Cook et al., 2017](#); [Cobbinah et al., 2017](#)).

The power of the mass base in symbolic interactionism

When viewed from the mass base, the two candidates are incumbent candidate Mukti Keliobas and former SBT Regent Abdullah Vanath for two terms. Mukti Keliobas, as the incumbent, is very likely to have a solid mass base with bureaucratic and financial support, and Raja Amarsekaru is very likely to win the election. The analysis of symbolic interactionism in the mean theory states that the local language as part of social interaction can maintain supporters' loyalty to local values and wisdom. Mukti Keliobas has a mass base in Gorom Island (Dapil 3) with a significant deposit of votes in the range of 7-10 thousand. At the same time, Abdullah Vanath also has a mass base in the Dapil 1 area targeting Werinama District and its surroundings.

Suppose we observe the political behavior of the SBT community in general. In that case, we will conclude that the percentage of voters based on symbols of character or figure is still relatively high. Mukti Keliobas, with his position as a traditional figure (king), certainly has the opportunity to be re-elected. Meanwhile, Abdullah Vanath, during the Pilkada, appeared as a mentor for the Nina Ramah pair. However, the legacy of leadership in the previous two periods is quite difficult to forget for the people of SBT. Several records of success while leading, along with his character as one of the originators of the expansion of SBT, are still magnets that cannot be forgotten. One thing to keep in mind, the breakdown of the Mufakat duet, is also very influential with the solid appearance of the Nina Friendly pair. Whether the Mufakat government failed or succeeded, this indicator has more or less eroded the strength of Mukti Keliobas and Fachri Husni Alkatiri, who currently choose to appear separately. Even though they appear separated, the election results show that the incumbent pair is still too strong to be defeated by the Mufakat pair and the Nina Ramah pair.

The phenomenon of the power of symbolic interactionism from Abdullah Vanat can be seen in the momentum carried out by Nina Ramah ahead of the SBT Pilkada. For example, during the declaration of the Nina Ramah pair, the process of entering the support for KTP A registration to the SBT KPU, this couple was quite a surprise with the presence of thousands of extraordinary supporters. This pair was able to qualify as an independent pair in the SBT Pilkada, a success that should be appreciated. Mukti Keliobas and Fahmi Alkatiri as Regent and Deputy Regent for the 2015-2020 period, respectively, with 36,959 or 54.33% votes, which at that time appeared with the Mufakat jargon, this pair managed to beat their rival SUS-GOO (Sitti Ageia Suruwaky-Sjaifuddin Goo) which only pocketed 31,062 votes or 45.67%. Now Mukti Keliobas has partnered with Idris Rumalutur by carrying the jargon of ADIL. At the same time, Fachri Husni Alkatiri has also chosen Arobi Kelian as his partner by carrying the jargon of Faham.

The determination of the results of this five-year democratic party was marked by a hammer knock by the Chair of the SBT KPUD, Kisman Kelian, at the Open Plenary Meeting for the Recapitulation and Determination of the Regency Level Vote Count Results in the 2020 East Seram Regent and Deputy Regent Elections, Friday 18/12/2020 night. The Plenary Meeting was held at the KPUD SBT Office in Bula City, attended by witnesses from each pair of candidates. Based on the results of the district level recapitulation, the pair Abdul Mukti Keliobas - Idris Rumalutur (ADIL) won 31,100 votes, defeating the candidate pair Fahri Husni Alkatiri - Arobi Kelian (Faham), who received 20,939 votes and Rohani Vanath-Ramli Mahu (Nina-Rama) who had 15,555 votes.

4 Conclusion

The power of incumbent political symbolism in the regional elections of East Seram Regency using the symbolic interactionism theory from Mead shows that the power of symbolism is extreme, especially for incumbent candidates by utilizing political and cultural networks and being the king of Amarsekaru who has cultural power. The strength of this cultural symbolism is proof that constituent loyalty in the Pilkada still sees a symbol of character rather than party strength as practiced by the couple Fachri Husni Alkatiri who also chose Arobi Kelian as his running mate by carrying the jargon of Faham. This symbolism which the author later referred to as part of the Strong People in the 2020 Pilkada.





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