

BALINESE HINDU RELIGIO-POLITIC AND REGIONAL HEAD ELECTIONS IN GIANYAR DISTRICT

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Abstract

The election for the regional head in Gianyar regency is somewhat unique because a puri (royal/palace) figure always appears running for regent. The Gianyar community itself still adheres to a very strong puri-centric ideology. The relationship between the puri and the community is mainly bound in the corridors of religion and custom. This study aims to look at the relationship between the various roles of Puri Agung Ubud and the electability of the royal figures who run in regional elections. The research method uses an interpretive paradigm with phenomenological studies conducted in two villages, namely Ubud village and Peliatan village. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation with informants. This research shows that in the context of the Gianyar regional election, the figure of Puri Agung Ubud uses a Balinese Hindu political approach rooted in the religious, social (traditional), and economic values of a Pakraman (traditional) village community. Through religious, customary, and economic investment, the puri figure took advantage of his/her emotional intimacy with the village community to gain political support in the Gianyar regional election.

Keywords: Balinese Hindu Religio-Politic; Puri Agung Ubud Elite; Gianyar Regional Election.

Introduction

After the reformation, the political system adopted by Indonesia is a democratic system. This system allows the community to be directly involved in selecting a leader. Indonesian people have the opportunity to choose leaders at the central and regional levels. And this democratic system is an arena for politicians to show their personal qualities, in addition to targeted programs that are really needed by the community. For democracy to be stable and run smoothly, it requires political trust from the public in the government

(Mauk, 2021). The democratic system can also be understood as a government system formed through elections that aim to regulate shared life based on legal rules that are in favor of the community (Gunawan, 2018, p. 70). In Bali, there is a discourse that wants to encourage figures of *puri* as a leader who is seen as capable of maintaining traditions, culture, and customs which have become the identity of the Balinese people. *Puri* itself is a Balinese aristocrat, including the *ksatria* (knight) class, which is still respected by the community. In ancient times the knight class was the group in charge of running the wheels of government. This is related to the caste system adopted by the Balinese people. The Balinese people most conspicuously use the caste system both from their name and social status (I Made Darsana, Holilulloh, 2015).

Puri, during the royal era, was the center of government, trade center, and cultural center (Tejawati, 2017, p. 2). The heyday of the palaces in Bali lasted from the 14th century AD to the 19th century AD (Munandar, 2005, p. 3). *Puri* played a central role in the play of power in colonial Bali (Suryawan, 2021). The *Puri* family is an elite group that controls a large amount of power, and this group has differentiation/specificity that distinguishes it from ordinary people (Garrido Vergara, 2014, p. 32). The elite can be called a superior group that excels compared to other groups (Mosca, 1939). During the New Order era, the figure of the *puri* did not seem significant because only those with close ties to Suharto would get positions in the regions. The New Order caused a change in the political map in Bali, especially with the emergence of Suharto's Golkar Party (Pramana, 2015, p. 59). During the New Order era, *Puri* was only an intermediary media between the central government and local communities (Ichwannuddin, 2013, p. 4). After entering the reformation phase, the political climate underwent a change. *Puri* figures began to emerge to the surface to regain their lost power. Even some *puri* figures have shown the identity of a particular political party (Suwitha, 2015, p. 114). The positions that *Puri* had in the past were based on lineage. However, during the reform era, such positions had to be obtained from the community's support (Haryanto, 2017).

The regional head election in Gianyar regency is somewhat unique because the figure for the regional leader has several times been filled by a *puri* figure. The Gianyar regional election was even called a place for fighting for the prestige of the blue race (Anonymous, 2011). *Puri Agung Ubud* is a palace whose figures have held various legislative and executive positions. The figures from *Puri Agung Ubud* who had served as regents of Gianyar were Tjokorda Gede Budi Suryawan and Tjokorda Oka Artha Ardana Sukawati. Tjokorda Raka Kerthyasa, who was included in the 2018 Gianyar regent nomination, also comes from *Puri Agung Ubud*, and he has previous experience in

the legislature. It can be said that the Gianyar region still adheres to a very strong 'puri-centric' ideology. In fact, in every regional election held, the rivalry between the puri elite seems to dominate the social-political landscape in the area (Bagus, Ari, Azhar, & Noak, 2018, p. 2). The strong relationship between the puri and the community has been built for a long time. The relationship between the palace and its community is bound by religion, custom, and economy. These three elements characterize the political approach taken by the Puri Agung Ubud elite towards the community.

The 2018 regional election in Gianyar district was joined by one of the Puri Agung Ubud figures, namely Tjokorda Raka Kerthyasa (Cok Ibah). He ran for regent in pairs with Pande Istri Maharani. The pairs of candidates were supported by the United Gianyar Coalition (KGB), a coalition of the Golkar Party, Gerindra Party, the Democratic Party, and PKPI. Cok Ibah's background narrative in participating in the regent election was to serve the community. For Cok Ibah himself, politics is not only always a matter of seeking political power or position, but more importantly, is the media to channel people's aspirations. The approach was always based on the philosophy (views) and culture of the people of Gianyar and Bali (Gunarta, 2018). Life for him is the same as art because the meaning of art itself in Sanskrit is offering (News, 2018). So that through this philosophical knowledge, he is willing to devote himself to the interests of the whole society.

Another example is Tjokorda Oka Artha Ardana Sukawati (Cok Ace), who became regent in 2008. At the time, he was nominated by the Golkar Party. He is an academic and businessman and is involved in many social activities. In the Ubud area, Cok Ace is well known for his social services (ngayah) by dancing a sacred dance during a religious ceremony. Ngayah is a social obligation of the Balinese Hindu community to sincerely work together in temples or banjar (Prita, 2019). The various roles played by the figures of Puri Agung Ubud in the fields of religion, community, and economics have made the palace's existence and influence so strong. The political power base of Puri Agung Ubud is different from other palaces in Bali. Puri Agung Ubud is more inclined to build relationships at the grassroots, which has been built for a long time (Arida, 2012). The grassroots approach is inseparable from local traditions, culture, and customs. The relationship between the puri and the community is like a puri and panjak (peasants or the people), where people devote themselves to puri as a form of remuneration for everything that has been given to their families. This relationship is a symbiotic relationship of mutualism that benefits one another, which was formerly an instrumental friendship bond now leading to a professional technical bond (Ayu, Mahadewi, Erawan, & Noak, 2017, p. 4). The intimacy of the puri and the community is based on trust in the responsibility

carried out by the puri. The relationship between the puri and the community is so close that the puri often provides various forms of assistance to the community, and on the other hand, the community does not hesitate to request help from the puri when needed (Panuju, 2019, p. 78)

In the Gianyar regional election, supporting political parties will approach several villages, which are the mass base of Puri Agung Ubud, which consists of traditional village administrators such as bendesa, keliat adat or prajuru of the traditional village. This approach is not done instantly but has been built for a long time. Pakraman village, or what is known as adat, is often used as a political tool (Sutarya, 2018). The role of the village administrator is so important, especially in mobilizing the village community to choose a puri figure as a leader. The intimacy of the palace and the community is the fruit of the religious, social, and economic investment instilled by the Puri Agung Ubud family in the community. Puri Agung Ubud itself often provides assistance in building temples, repairing temples, and building traditional village facilities such as making wantilan, temples and helping to make improvements (ngodak) sesuhunan barong, tapel/mask owned by a pakraman village. In addition, Puri Agung Ubud is also directly involved as a traditional village administrator as bendesa (chief) whose job is to deal with adat issues. This is an opportunity to expand the network with other pakraman villages.

This research is essentially different from previous studies that discuss religio-politic. Such as research from (Selka, 2007) on religio-politic in Brazil, which focused on religio-politic based on ethnicity issues; research from (Bangash, 2012) on religio-politic in India, which focused on achieving power using caste issues; research from (Ozzano, 2013) regarding religio-politic in Turkey which explains the rise of religion driven by modern elites such as political parties; research from (DeCanio, 2007) which explains religio-politic in the United States where party political behavior is based on religious and economic considerations as two different elements; research from (Maritain, 2014) regarding religio-politic in France, which explains political secularism that separates religious elements from the political life of the French state. The previous studies that discussed religio-politic in several countries only led to the belief system adopted by a society as an ideology and belief inherent in each human being. Meanwhile, this study wants to explain religio-politic originating from Balinese Hindu belief values, in which this religio-politic not only leads to a belief system but also to the cultural system adopted by the people. This Balinese Hindu political approach stems from three elements, namely religion, society (traditional), and economy. This religious spirit became an instrument for the Puri Agung Ubud figure to compete in the local election contestation.

The theory that will be used as an analysis tool is Berger's theory of religion as the main theory and is supported by the social network theory from Wellman to discuss social networks that strengthen political support for puri elites who run in the regional elections and patron-client theory to understand the control of the puri's financial resources in connection with the society as a driving force for the political power of the palace elite.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses an interpretive paradigm with phenomenological studies. Phenomenological research focuses on the value of subjectivity that exists in the reality of this study. And phenomenological studies focus on the experiences of everyday human life (Asih, 2014, p. 75). This research is conducted in two villages in Gianyar district, namely Ubud village and Peliatan village. The research subjects were the royal elite, political parties, and society. Research informants were all the individuals studied, representing people who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998, p. 118). The research object is to see the relationship between the role of the puri and the community, which has an impact on the electability of the puri elites who are running in the local elections. The data collection technique used was in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. For data validity techniques, source triangulation was used by verifying the data through information from different informants to ensure the data obtained was valid.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Balinese Hindu Religio-Politic

Religion is a belief system that cannot be separated from the life of Indonesian people (Kristyanto, Sianipar, Nugroho, & Destyanto, 2022, p. 16). Religion has become an important part of the social system, culture, and human civilization (Kristyanto et al., 2022, p. 16). Even Habermas stated the importance of religious politics in providing moral motivation to act and build a collective life (CAKIR, 2021, p. 144). Balinese Hindu religio-politic is a political approach rooted in religious, social (traditional), and economic values. This political religion believes that mastering the customs and economy of society can result in power. Puri Agung Ubud often provides construction assistance at Kahyangan Tiga Temple in Ubud village. Basically, the palace has facilitated the devotion and gratitude of the village community to Ida Sang Hyang Widhi (God), and this construction

assistance will indirectly build emotional intimacy between the society and the puri. And the responsibility of the puri does not end with the construction stage. The puri still has the responsibility to back up all the necessary funding for the implementation of various ceremonies at the temple. So that the village community feels indebted for the services provided by the puri. Besides that, Puri Agung Ubud often helps the community improve (ngodak) sesuhunan in the form of barong, tapel, and masks worn by a traditional village. And usually, a ceremony to revive the sesuhunan those who dwell in the temple will be assisted financially by the puri.

This Balinese Hindu religio-politic contains three important elements, namely religious investment, social investment, and economic investment. The religious investment referred to is the assistance provided by Puri Agung Ubud by building temples, repairing temples, building wantilan, constructing temples, and financial back-up for religious ceremonies. Social investment is the development of a social network owned by the puri with the community through various assistance provided by the puri. And economic investment is mastery of economic resources used to help village communities in the form of goods or services. With the investment invested by the puri, the puri will certainly expect returns in the future. The relationship built by the puri and the community has been formed for a long time and has been consistently carried out by Puri Agung Ubud until now so that the political choices of the village community will not be separated from various considerations for the assistance that has been provided by the puri family. Puri and various ritual ceremonies can be regarded as a way to strengthen their power and political legitimacy in the midst of society (Dwipayana, 2001, p. 130).

The political approach implemented by Puri Agung Ubud emphasizes material and immaterial elements. These two elements have become part of the daily life of the Balinese Hindu community. The Balinese need a place of worship (a temple) as a form of devotion to Ida Sang Hyang Widhi. Apart from that, the Balinese are also bound by custom, which requires them to carry out customs related to various ceremonial rituals at the temple, and this is usually done by the Pakraman village community. To carry out the ceremony requires the cost of religious necessities (banten), which is dedicated to bhatara (god) who resides in the temple. The Balinese Hindu community is bound by custom and religion and becomes a unit that cannot be separated because they are interrelated. This is where the great role played by Puri Agung Ubud to the community in carrying out their traditional and religious obligations. This was emphasized by Gertz, who stated that Balinese people's obedience to the king was formed through rituals of, major ceremonies, and religious symbols (Geertz, 2017).

In the system of religio-political power, religion is a tool of legitimacy to reach and gain power (Joebagio, 2012, p. 172). At the moment of the regional election, the political party supporting the puri figure will carry out a strategy by approaching several customary villages, which are the support base for Puri Agung Ubud. The party will usually ask for help from village officials such as bendesa, kelian adat, and prajuru of the traditional villages in mobilizing the community to elect the puri figures as leaders in the local elections. Traditional village administrators will usually provide directions conducted in a *paruman* (village meeting) attended by the entire village community to provide support to the running puri leaders. In addition to that the village administrators will provide an explanation of the roles and contributions the puri has made to the village so far. Based on the various assistance provided by the puri, there are rational reasons that led the village administrator to have the courage to direct the community to support the figures of the puri. Collaboration with village administrators such as bendesa is very necessary because bendesa is a community figure who is respected by his people. What is said by the bendesa will be followed by the Pakraman village community.

In addition, the Puri Agung Ubud figure also carried out *soroh* political strategy by approaching some *soroh*, one of them being *soroh pasek*. *Soroh* is a social bond in the Balinese Hindu community that refers to one lineage/clan (Saraswati, Erviantono, & Noak, 2016). *Soroh pasek* is a *soroh*/clan with the largest mass base in Bali. If the *soroh pasek* is successfully approached, the support for the puri figures will automatically increase. During the regional election, the figure of Puri Agung Ubud would approach the *jero gede* (chief) of the *soroh pasek* and convey the intention to obtain support from the *soroh pasek* in the Gianyar region. *Soroh* politic is seen as important because the Balinese still adhere to their *kasta/wangsa* culture to date. *Kasta* or *wangsa* is related to the *pasemetonan* (familial) network, for example, the *soroh pasek*. *Pasemetonan* network will further increase the political support of Puri Agung Ubud figures in the regional elections. Puri Agung Ubud figures also approach religious figures such as *Sulinggih* and *pemangku*. The approach is only limited to asking for blessings so that the journey of the candidacy goes smoothly, but will indirectly impact the support obtained from the *sisya* (students) of these religious figures. Puri Agung Ubud, in this case, has the strength in building religious networks in the field of religion and community (I Gusti Ngurah Guna Wintara, Muhammad Ali Azhar, 2008).

The Balinese Hindu religio-politic is different from the religio-politic in other countries because this religio-politic is done by giving assistance in building temples. Because by building a temple, the puri will automatically have a strong emotional connection with a

traditional village community. In addition to the emotional connection, the puri will have a network both with the community and the village administrator. And the puri's task is not finished only by building a temple, but the puri's responsibility for the traditional village will continue, where the puri will always help and financially back up all the ceremonial needs needed in the temple. As in Bentuyung Sakti Ubud, Puri Agung Ubud assisted in the construction of the Kahyangan Tiga Temple in the area, and until now, the palace has continued its responsibilities regarding the ceremony that took place at the Kahyangan Tiga Temple, including for temple repair, Puri Agung Ubud will help the people of Bentuyung Sakti in terms of cost. Religion, in this case, is an ideological tool that can be used to gain a political advantage (Williams, 1996, p. 376).

In Berger's thought, religion is the source of legitimacy that influences human behavior. Religion appears as a mechanism for human survival from all chaos and uncertainty (Hjelm, 2018, p. 3). In Berger's perspective, religion leads to immaterial elements in the form of belief systems that originate from God's revelation. Whereas in this study, the emphasis on aspects of Balinese Hindu, in particular, does not only contain immaterial elements but also material elements. Balinese Hindu is based on the teachings of Tri Hita Karana, namely the balance of life with God (Parahyangan), the balance of life with fellow human beings (People), and the balance of life with nature (Palemahan). This teaching originally appeared because it was related to the existence of traditional villages in Bali (Budiastika, 2022). And Tri Hita Karana is part of Balinese culture and has been carried on for generations by a traditional village until today (Sukarma, 2016, p. 86). Balinese Hindu is a cultural religion in which there are customs and religions. Religion regulates human beliefs with Ida Sang Hyang Widhi; it is internal in nature. While adat regulates traditions and habits that are passed down from generation to generation and are external (physical) needs. Religion and custom are a unit that is interrelated and have been embedded in the daily life of the Balinese themselves. The custom itself is a form of implementation of the teachings of Balinese Hindu, and the Balinese themselves can be said to be a socioreligious society (Watra, 2019).

This research views that religion is not only a matter of human relations with their God, but also there are relationships between human beings. Therefore, it is important in politics to build ideological intimacy, but it is also necessary to build emotional relationships with others. So that with emotional intimacy, a network will be formed that can be used for certain things. The formation of social networks that are cooperative in nature will facilitate political achievement. Because in this network, various elements of society support each other with the same interests. The social networks built by Puri Agung Ubud are the traditional village network, the inter-

network of soroh, and a network of religious figures that will make it easier to achieve the interests of puri figures in regional election contestation. The formation of this network is not done instantly but requires a long process to build the trust of the community in the puri. To strengthen this network, a supplement is needed that is able to boost the political power of the Puri figures. This supplement comes from the economic elements.

Supplement to the political power of the Puri figure is the mastery of Puri's economic resources over the Pakraman village community. The relationship between the puri and the community is a symbiotic patron-client relationship of mutualism. In this case, the puri is a patron who has economic resources who always provides assistance to the pakraman village, and conversely, the pakraman village community feels indebted and will repay the patron's services by complying with the political wishes of the puri family. Puri Agung Ubud often provides assistance related to religious activities through goods or services. It is not uncommon for the Puri Agung Ubud to provide assistance in the form of money used for the construction of temples, building wantilan, and financing ceremonies. The community feels the benefits and advantages of the puri's assistance so that the community feels dependent on the puri. This sense of dependency can be used by the puri leaders to gain support from the village community. So that it can be said that economic factors also influence the support for Puri Agung Ubud figures who run in regional elections in addition to religious and social (customary) factors.

CONCLUSION

The Balinese Hindu religio-politic run by the figure of Puri Agung Ubud is a political approach based on religious, social (traditional), and economic strengths. The religio-politic of this puri figure does not only function to build ideological ties but also social and economic ties. This political approach is the fruit of the relationship that has existed between the puri and the community, which is a symbiotic mutualism. Puri Agung Ubud so far often helps the community in facilitating various ceremonial needs and helps the community carry out their obligations as Balinese Hindus, and conversely, the community feels indebted for what the puri has given.

development, the puri has automatically built a network with a pakraman village. The puri maintains the continuity of relations by providing financial back-up for ceremonial purposes needed at temples that are carried out by a pakraman village. Investments that have been invested by the puri can certainly be used for certain political achievements.

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