



Negotiating Tradition and Modernity: A Case Study of Hybrid Political Cultures in Village Governance, North Tapanuli, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

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This article explores the intersection of modern values and traditional knowledge within the political culture of village governance in North Tapanuli Regency. The hybridization of these elements is considered critical, especially in light of the apparent inadequacy of modernization theory to drive development in developing countries. Seven key informants were involved in this research, chosen based on their familiarity with the Toba Batak traditional system and their involvement in village governance, such as holding the position of village head. Traditional knowledge informs the selection of village heads through a Toba Batak custom known as 'si soli-soli'. This traditional process occurs alongside the government-regulated direct elections for village heads. The resulting cultural hybridity in electing village heads has led to a more equitable and peaceful redistribution of political power. This fusion of traditional and modern practices yields a robust political legacy, compelling the elected village head to maintain the honor of their clan. The article concludes that the dialogue between traditional knowledge and modern values continues to shape the political culture of village governance in North Tapanuli Regency.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development trajectory of countries in the Global South, or developing nations, stands at a significant crossroads. These countries have long followed development ideologies promoted by western nations, yet the outcomes have often failed to meet their expectations. Ironically, while these nations may wish to draw upon traditional knowledge, they find themselves increasingly alienated from it. They appear to be ardently pursuing elusive and idealized modern values, while also experiencing anxiety about embracing the traditional knowledge that once shaped the peaceful, egalitarian, and exotic histories of their ancestors.

The term 'development' first emerged in social theory in late 1945, at the conclusion of the Second World War, as a response to the war's direct and indirect impacts on societies [1]. Pansera suggests that development has since morphed into an industry—the "development industry". Referring to President-elect Truman's speech from January 20, 1949, Pansera further contends that at that time, half of the world's population was entrapped in a cycle of poverty. The proposed solution to this poverty was the transfer of modern knowledge to impoverished nations. Development was a discourse crafted by Orientalists and subsequently sold to the West. Historical records reveal that Rome, under the guise of 'development', frequently invaded regions it deemed inferior. Similarly, Christianity and Islam have often used analogous justifications to persuade pagans to convert [2].

The ultimate goal of the modernization journey, envisioned as an era of high mass consumption, has not been realized [3]. Instead, it has led to increased inequality among populations the North and South regions of the world. After 40 years of modernization theory being introduced and applied, it turns out that poverty, exploitation, debt crises, malnutrition and violence are increasing in Asia, Africa and Latin America [4].

Table 1. Stages of development of society in the world

Dichotomy	Theorist
From status (for example, dependence on the family) to contractual (individual) responsibility	H. S. Maine
From instinctive to purposive decision-making	W. Wundt
From a theological orientation to a positivistic orientation	A. Comte
From a religious-militaristic society to an industrial-quiescent society	H. Spencer
From a mechanical (collective, static) order to an organic (individual rights, specialization) solidarity	E. Durkheim
From <i>Gemeinschaft</i> (a living organism) to <i>Gesellschaft</i> (a mechanical aggregate)	F. Tonnies
From overemphasizing the sacred to overemphasizing the secular	H. Becker
From ascriptive status to achieved status	R. Linton
From mainly rural to mainly urban communities	R. Riesman
From a predominantly inner-directedness to a predominantly other-directedness	D. Riesman
From traditional to modern	D. Lerner

In the creed of modernization theory, every society will experience stages of development from traditional society to modern society. In other words, if a country wants to progress, then it must abandon traditional values as well as adopt and practice western modern values in order to progress. Traditional values or traditional knowledge considered incompatible with development must be abandoned. This linear evolution of social change has been summarized by several social science thinkers [5] as shown in the Table 1.

Modernization offers a development track that starts from the stage of traditional society to the stage of society with the age of high mass-consumption [5] as shown in the Table 2.

Table 2. Stages of development

Societal Types	Significant Characteristics
Traditional society	Pre-Newtonian science, limited production, fatalism
Preconditions for take-off	New attitude to change, smaller families, selection on merit, entrepreneurial class
Take-off	Development of science, discovery of new continents, nationalism, national savings rise to 10%
The driver to maturity	Economic growth becomes normal, differentiated industrialization
The age of high mass-consumption	Pursuit of external power, welfare state, mass consumption

Capitalism is the offspring of modernization. Weber explained two factors driving the growth of capitalism in Europe. These two factors are the Calvinist ethics and the rational instrumental action which simultaneously form the basis of their social actions in everyday life (elective affinity). These two values, in Weber's view, are not found in other religions on other continents, so that Europe is considered as the fertile land of capitalism [6]. This is evident from the history of economic development that in the 1900s life expectancy and per capita income of all countries on the five continents of the world were relatively the same at first, but after the 1900s, economic growth in Europe increased rapidly leaving behind the countries on the other continents [7].

The central role of culture in development has long been a concern of social science thinkers in Indonesia. Koentjaraningrat in the book "Culture of Mentality and Development" seeks to explain life problems and orientation values of Indonesian people in general, as described in the Table 3 [8].

Table 3. Cultural value orientation framework

Life Problems	Cultural Value Orientation		
The essence and nature of life	Life is bad	Life is good	Life is bad but it can be improved
The essence of work	Work to live	Work is to find a position	Work is to increase the quality of work
The essence of human position in space and time	The past	The present	The future
The essence of human relationship with nature	Submit to nature	Seeking harmony with nature	Dominate nature
The nature of relations between humans	Respect superior figures	Emphasize a sense of dependence on others (spirit of collectivism)	Emphasize a sense of independence from others (spirit of individualism)

The orientation of cultural values regarding the meaning of life, work, time, the relationship between humans and nature, and the relationship between humans are assumed to influence the progress of a nation. In terms of the essence of time, for example, a person is considered traditional if his time orientation is more oriented to the past, whereas a person is considered modern if his time orientation is looking at the future. In other words, a person (or a nation) will progress if their time orientation is directed towards achieving a better future, not looking back at the past, let alone glorifying the past.

Discourses and development practices from Western countries were then refuted, especially by thinkers from Latin America and Africa. "Modernization is an element in the religion of modernity that is reproduced and disseminated to developing countries" [9]. Furthermore, "a society is never fully modern by nature, and even to some extent it becomes a victim of its own successful modernization" [10]. The failure of universal modernization centered on eurocentrism or U.S.-centrism then offers a "mainstreaming cultural liberty" approach so that development is more successful and respects the identity of each nation in particular and individual identity in general [11]. These thinkers sharply criticize modernization theory which is considered as western evangelization and as a new colonial model. If in the past colonization was carried out by occupying colonial lands, now colonization is carried out through a development approach.

The term development itself is not neutral but biased and related to power relations and the hegemony of the actors who discuss it. Development is in fact a power relationship and the interests of the actors involved in it. "Because development itself is the result of a process of dialectical interaction among various actors who have very different motivations and goals" [2]. Development discourse is western hegemony over third world countries with the aim of having third world countries follow western social construction. This construction was successfully built by European countries through colonial discourse as defined by Bhabha as cited by Escobar [3]: "[Colonial discourse] is an apparatus that turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences. Its predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for a 'subject people' through the production of knowledge in terms of which surveillance is exercised and a complex form of pleasure/unpleasure is incited. [...] The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction. [...] I am referring to a form of governmentality that in marking out a 'subject nation,' appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity".

Western domination of developing countries in particular and the Third World in general, in terms of culture, politics and economy, was carried out through conquest and colonialization which is better known as Euro-centered colonialism. Colonialism aims to build a formal European system in the former colonial countries. Not infrequently this colony is carried out through the killing of indigenous people in colonial countries. Quijano, for example, noted "Between the Aztec-Maya-Caribbean and the Tawantinsuyana (or Inca) areas, about 65 million inhabitants were exterminated in a period of less than 50 years. The scale of this extermination was so huge that it involved not only a demographic catastrophe, but also the destruction of societies and cultures.

The cultural repression and the massive genocide together turned the previous high cultures of America into illiterate, peasant subcultures condemned to orality; that is, deprived of their own patterns of formalized, objectivised, intellectual, and plastic or visual expression” [12].

Colonies over territories have indeed ended, but colonies in culture, economy, politics, and development are still ongoing. In fact, Euro-centered development has failed in many ways in Third World countries in particular and in developing countries in general. “The failure of the modernization approach through the introduction of technology by making the country a laboratory state such as the aircraft building project in Indonesia, the super modern city in India during the Rajiv Gandhi regime, and the *cientificos* project in Brazil also ended in failure” [13].

The impasse of modernization theory has pushed countries in the south to seek a development approach based on local culture, which is better known as traditional knowledge. Traditional knowledge is seen to be successful in driving development because this culture is firmly attached to the collective memory of the community and has been their reference in action [14]. Unfortunately, the contribution of traditional knowledge also suffered the same fate and ended in failure. The failure was caused because traditional knowledge could not be used as a poverty alleviation strategy and was difficult to replicate elsewhere. The failure of the modernization approach and traditional knowledge has prompted some experts to campaign for “anti-development” and “beyond development” which then gave birth to post-development.

This article will address two questions, namely: (1) hybridization between traditional knowledge and modern values in village development; and (2) describe a case study that the author calls the concept of hybrid culture. This hybrid culture is a mixture of traditional knowledge and modern values, namely direct democracy. Traditional knowledge here is the village head election system which is better known as the local concept, namely *si soli-soli* with direct village head election.

Modernization in this article is defined as values that rely on the role of science, hard work, competition, the desire to achieve, innovation, free market, and the accumulation of profits. There is a dichotomy between modernity and tradition. If the former is seen as encouraging development, the latter is considered lacking or incompatible with development.

Furthermore, the modernity referred to in this article is how these values are used as a source of values, orientation and attitudes of village heads and traditional leaders in the political culture of village government in particular and village development in general after the implementation of fiscal decentralization, better known as the Village Funds (*Dana Desa*) and the Village Fund Allocation (*Dana Alokasi Desa*).

1.1 Cultural hybridization

Hybridization can be traced from the point of view of cybernetics, structuration, and the integration of macro and micro theories in the study of Sociology. The theory of cybernetics was put forward by Talcott Parsons, who stated that society is a system consisting of parts or subs that are interrelated and influence one another. Parson argues that society is a system that is interdependent and integrated with one another. Parson is one of the theorists who emphasizes balance (equilibrium) and tends to ignore conflict. In the point

of view of systems theory, the entirety (wholeness) is far more important than the sub-sections in a system. If a sub-system is not integrated and independent within the system, then it will become useless. Each sub-system usually performs the function of adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and maintenance of patterns of behavior in order to survive (later pattern-maintenance), or more popularly known as the AGIL scheme [15].

Furthermore, with more or less the same approach, the structuring approach is almost the same as the hybridization concept. Structural theory seeks to bridge micro theories (such as the theory of symbolic interaction) versus macro theories in Sociology (such as the theory of structural functionalism). Structuring offers the idea that in social change, actors or agents are not always subject to structural pressures at the macro level (such as culture, law, and the economy). The role of actors or individuals (micro theory) at a certain level can sometimes change the structure, continued Giddens. This thinking seeks to negate Marxian thinking which has always been firm with the view that humans (the proletariat) will always be defeated by structures (power, law, religion and the economy) and it is difficult to make historical changes. This is in line with the notion that actors are puppets who are always controlled by the structure as puppeteers [16].

From the explanation of cybernetics, structuring, and integration of micro and macro theories, then hybrids will be discussed. The term hybridity never ends the debate and tension between traditional and modern terms, including the polarization of both. On the one hand, hybridity can open a space between two zones of purity following biological thinking that distinguishes two species with discrete characteristics which then give birth to pseudospecies hybrids from a combination of the two.

In a sense, hybridization between traditional and modern can give birth to new concepts or syncretism of both. For example, when divine religion dominates an indigenous people's territory, syncretism occurs between that religion and the traditions of indigenous peoples through a process of cultural cross-over that bridged the two [17]. Nestor Garcia Canclini, further describes the process of socio-cultural hybridization in which discrete structures or practices, previously in separate forms, are then combined to produce new structures, objects and practices.

Therefore, hybridity studies do not focus on hybridity, but the process of hybridization with a hybridization approach. Hybridity aims to change the object of identity study into cross-cultural heterogeneity and hybridization. The identity approach is no longer sufficient, which says that there is no self-contained and ahistorical essence of identity, and understands it as the way in which communities imagine themselves and construct a history of their origins and development. In a world that is interconnected and highly fluid, identity sedimentation is organized into stable historical groups (such as ethnicity, state and class), these stable groups then restructure themselves in relations between ethnic, transclass and transnational groups [17].

Jean Franco, as quoted by Canclini, described hybridity: “Hybrid Cultures is a book in search of a method” to avoid being “corseted into false oppositions such as high or popular, urban or rural, modern or traditional”. Hybrid culture has more or less the same subject matter as issues of syncretism in religion, *mestizaje* in history and anthropology, and fusion in music [17]. In the process of global production and consumption there is no longer any room to isolate oneself

from the influence of other countries. Cultural reproduction crosses between one another and each country to a certain degree will enter then leave modernity toward modernity deconstruction, and finally enter hybridity. This hybridity differs greatly from the modern-traditional dichotomy.

Hybridization is the process of blending of cultural elements into another culture, thus creating a syncretic culture by modifying the existing cultural elements to fit the currently dominant cultural norms. It is the exchange and innovation of ideas and practices between cultures, and the inevitable product of migration and globalization, which in Indonesia has increasingly intensified in the past century. In this article, hybridization occurs between elements of modern and traditional political cultural practices of village government in particular and village development in general.

For example, this hybridization occurs in the process of negotiation and practice between modern and traditional knowledge in the health service sector. Social practices between modern and traditional health service are carried out simultaneously. This concrete example is still carried out in several isolated villages where delivery services are still limited due to a lack of doctors and health infrastructure. Bridging this gap, birth services also rely on the services of midwives during the birthing process. Furthermore, these midwives are then given training by modern health workers to assist in a more hygienic delivery process to reduce maternal and child mortality.

1.2 Modernization, development, and capitalism

Weber concludes that the Calvinist ethics and the act of instrumental rationality with elective affinity are the two main factors driving the growth of capitalism in Europe [6]. Economic history records that social life and economic growth in all regions of the world in 1900s were relatively the same. This Calvinist ethic is drawn from Benjamin Franklin's asceticism, which is a person's value orientation at work. One has to work constantly, even though the goal has been achieved. So, the purpose of work is not merely the pursuit of money or wealth, but because indeed work is one's calling in life. Work is very important because the results of the work will produce prosperity. Prosperity is important because through prosperity we can fulfill education, health, housing, jobs, and hope for a better future for our offspring or future generation. Human prosperity is impossible without economic growth. Successful businesses are the engine of economic growth. Therefore, successful businesses are the prerequisite for human prosperity.

This is what Peter Senge calls the concept of the Mental Model. Deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, even pictures or images will influence how we understand the world and how we take action. Mental models are underlying beliefs that influence the way people behave. Culture is macro-level, mental model is micro. Mental models apply to individuals and groups and are identifiable and changeable. Culture reflects the aggregation of individual mental models and influences it [18].

Weber's work is not without criticism. Bagir Sadr criticized Weber for overrating the importance of Calvinist ethics in promoting the spirit and ethos of capitalism while looking at other religions, such as Islam, as inferior. Sadr argues that capitalism encourages individuals to be progressive and materialistic by sacrificing immaterial things such as religion and spirituality. This tendency encourages western society to

look more "to the world than to heaven". It creates value for material things, wealth, and possession, as well as directs all actions to achieve all of that. In turn, Western society wants higher freedom and independence. Capitalism eventually becomes a tragedy in the form of greed and oppression. Another tragedy is the history of Western colonialism, which to a certain extent was driven by the spirit of capitalism. Economic freedom that does not prohibit competition in the market, makes powerful groups gain monopoly, which in the end negates/limits freedom itself. Unlike Islam, which Sadr argues, is full of religiosity. Obedience to the heavenly world and satisfaction with purity are the main ethics in Islamic teachings. The principle of Islamic ethics is reciprocal responsibility to achieve social justice. Therefore, individual or personal freedom in Islam is very different from the point of view of capitalism. Western capitalism emphasizes the fulfillment of public interest by emphasizing private interest through the utmost possible freedom, while Islamic ethics rejects one or both of them having a prominent role, but rather integrates both to achieve the divine or divine satisfaction [19].

A critique in a similar vein was advanced by Robert Bellah. Robert Bellah's dissertation, *Tokugawa Religion: The Values of Pre-industrial Japan* in many respects is seen as parallel and has the same analogy with Weber's thoughts in *The Protestant Ethic*. Tokugawa Religion, which is often considered the same as civil religion and communitarianism, was the lever for the transformation of industry and market capitalism in Japan from the 17th to 19th centuries. Although the civil religion contained in Tokugawa Religion was seen as a driving force for capitalism in Japan, it was not exactly the same as the values the value of European capitalism which greatly exalts individual freedom and the motive of seeking as much profit as possible.

Tokugawa Religion is seen as the source and wellspring of communitarianism in Japan and even at a certain level is seen as an example of resistance to the Protestant Ethic and bourgeois freedom in Europe. Communitarianism emanates from the values that economic behavior must be in line with the wider political order. In other words, economic behavior does not merely achieve maximum profit and glorify competition (survival for the fittest), but every economic action must be followed by a social obligation to maintain harmony and concern in the wider society which is governed by state bureaucracy in Japan. Following the above argument, Bellah is classified as not a supporter of modernization theory because he criticizes the free market, the invisible hand capitalism, and individualism, which are the values and foundations of Western capitalism. Under the banner of modernization and rationalization studies, Bellah goes further to study feudalism as part of modernity and rejects the idea of freedom which is deeply rooted in European capitalism [20-22].

Weber's work is like harvesting apples in an orchard. The way someone picks apples in the orchard can be different from one another. The difference in how to pick apples can be influenced by "cultural" factors or one's religious affiliation. One particular cultural group or religious affiliation prefers to pick apples by climbing an apple tree, while another group (religious or cultural) simply shakes the apple tree. Of the two methods or cases, the apples were successfully picked but the quality of the apples picked would also be different. This image of picking apples then gave birth to particular forms of capitalism, namely: (1) occidental capitalism (climbing the apple tree); and (2) economic activity forms that are found

anywhere else (shaking the apple tree). This cultural difference (or religious affiliation) is consistent with the occidental capitalism in Germany, especially between the Protestant and Catholic religions, including how the different skills used by the two religions correspond to the different cultural rationalities they adhere to.

This article will examine the gap in approaches between the political culture of village government in particular and village development in general. Developing countries has often relied on modern development approaches replicated from Western countries and paid less attention to the cultural and religious context of the region. Alternatively, several development practitioners increasingly offer development based on traditional knowledge. The urgency and relevance of traditional knowledge is important to consider at the village governance level, because real and autonomous political entities have long been practiced at the village (huta) level in North Tapanuli Regency long before Indonesia became independent.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative paradigm approach. This study follows the assumptions of axiology, epistemology, and ontology with a qualitative approach. Data collection was carried out by in-depth interviews using a semi-open interview guide. There are two types of key informants were selected in this study. Firstly, the informant is someone who knows thoroughly the Toba Batak customs in the village. Secondly, informants are those involved in running the village government. The first type of informants were represented by the Dalihan Natolu Traditional Institution (LADN) organization and church activists who act as traditional leaders in the village. The second type of informants were represented by the Village Head, the Village Government Agency (BPD), and officials from the North Tapanuli Regency regent's office.

The following are two examples of open questions asked to key informants during two-months field research.

1. Name and explain traditional knowledge that is still practiced in development in general and village government in particular, especially in your village.

2. Is there a tug-of-war between modernization values and traditional knowledge during the process of running village government in North Tapanuli Regency?

To obtain valid data, the researcher triangulated the data with key informants who were interviewed in depth in stages. Although triangulation in qualitative research was previously debated, triangulation according to theorists has been considered a legitimate research strategy [23, 24]. As with case studies in qualitative research, the results of this research cannot be generalized and become a generally accepted conclusion.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Hybridization of modern and traditional knowledge

The hybridization referred to in this article is the structuring between traditional knowledge of the Toba Batak community with modern values and village development. The Batak people in general and the Toba Batak in particular are one of

19 indigenous peoples in Sumatra [25]. Although the Toba Batak people have been influenced by Hinduism and later Christianity, these people still adhere to their traditions. "Even in the early 1860s when most Toba Batak were converted to Christianity, many of them still had a strong connection to their indigenous beliefs. On Samosir Island, especially, a few of these older rituals and ceremonies are still being practiced" [26]. "Today, the Batak groups are listed as the Karo, the Simalungun, the Pakpak Dairi, the Toba, and the Angkola-Mandailing. It was the Europeans who first placed these clusters of communities in and around Lake Toba who spoke a similar dialect and shared customs under one rubric, the Toba" [27].

Then how did the process of hybridization between traditional knowledge and modernized values take place in Toba Batak society in particular and in North Tapanuli Batak in general? The following section will explain the process of hybridizing the two. The dialectic of thought continues to clash as the clash of civilizations put forward by Huntington [28]. Likewise, traditional knowledge and modern values collide and even dominate each other so that one is considered to be superior and the other to be inferior.

An informant, a pastor and (former) activist, explained that the starting point for the conquest of Batak traditional knowledge occurred when the green revolution was introduced in Indonesia during President Suharto era. The introduction of the green revolution to farmers was carried out without dialogue with traditional knowledge that had already been practiced by the Batak people. In fact, the traditional knowledge of the Batak ethnicity has regulated a comprehensive relationship between culture, nature, and faith/spirituality. In the traditional knowledge of the Batak people, the forest is part of the Batak people as well as their source of livelihood known as customary forest. The concept and meaning of land among the Batak people are also important. There is no land or forest in Batak land that has no owner. That is how the concept of customary land and customary forest is known. However, the state claims that land and forest belong to the state. The state claims on state forest and state land versus customary land and customary forest are the arena of real power relations between the state and the Batak society.

This informant further explained Batak local wisdom: "Batak philosophy says 'Suan ma nanaeng allangon mu, allang ma na sinuanmu'", meaning plant what you eat, eat what you plant. In the past, according to the traditional knowledge of the Batak people, excess agricultural production sold to the market (onan) were yields of poor quality while the best crops and animal husbandry were for self-consumption. Also, another local wisdom from farmers is reflected in the words: "sinur napinahan, gabe naniula, horas jolma," meaning that farmers cannot live without livestock, so raising livestock has become a tradition besides being a farmer.

Hybridization between traditional knowledge and the green revolution at a certain level has not succeeded in increasing the Developing Village Index (IDM) in North Tapanuli Regency, because the district's IDM score is still in the lagging category with a score of 0.5904. For information, IDM scoring consists of 5 (five) categories, namely (1) very underdeveloped villages (<0.491); (2) underdeveloped villages (>0.491 and <0.599); (3) developing villages (>0.599 and <0.707); (4) developed villages (>0.707 and <0.815); and (5) independent village (>0.815).

However, hybridization between traditions such as sakke

hudali (in Indonesian means hanging up a hoe) and the green revolution at a certain level will maintain farmer solidarity in the village. Traditional knowledge of sakke hudali is a tradition in the Toba Batak community where residents of one village stop working for a few days or hang up hoes (sakke hudali) after the rice planting season. They cut the buffalo meat together to be consumed together. This traditional knowledge existed before Christianity and Islam entered the Batak lands.

The relationship between culture and nature is reciprocal from the perspective of traditional knowledge. The relationship between the two occurs in the exchange of natural resources with the culture of the indigenous population which is called moral ecology. In comparison, when Dayak farmers in the island of Kalimantan (Borneo) with a shifting crop system, for example, they will slaughter pigs as an expression of gratitude. “Furthermore, the harvest surplus of a Dayak citizen will also be distributed to residents who experienced harvest shortfall. In other words, the Dayak family’s crop surplus will be redistributed to families experiencing a crop deficit” [29, 30]. The relationship between humans and nature is described in Figure 1 on the management model of the Dayak tribe by Dove.

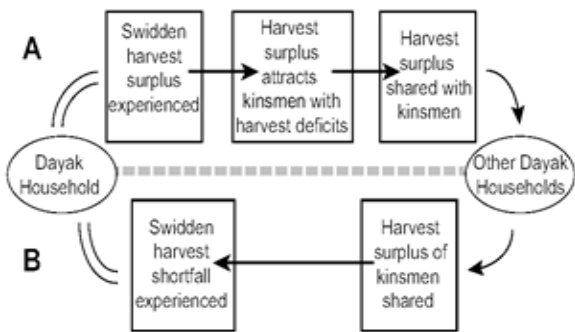


Figure 1. Dayak management model

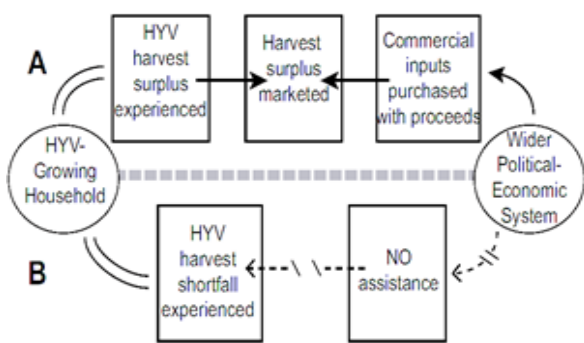


Figure 2. Green revolution management model

The relationship between culture and nature is inversely proportional to the era of green revolution agriculture. The green revolution, which is one of the derivatives of modernization, has the basic principle of maximizing production by exploiting nature through the introduction of various technologies (including seeds, fertilizers and pesticides) in the agricultural sector known as HYV (High Yielding Variety). The excess production is then sold to the market to make a profit. But unfortunately, the massive technological inputs increase production costs and farmers become very dependent on seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. Profits are rarely enjoyed by farmers even though they have

exploited natural extracts as much as possible. Consequently, the reciprocity between nature and humans (moral ecology) becomes exploitative and relations between humans are almost non-shareable, as described by Dove in Figure 2 on the green revolution management model [30].

The hybridization of traditional knowledge with modern values, namely direct democracy, can be seen in the direct election of village heads in North Tapanuli Regency. This traditional knowledge is the election of village heads based on Toba Batak customary law, better known as *si soli-soli*. The village (*huta*) is an autonomous political and governmental unit in the customary law of the Toba Batak people which still survives to this day. The right to internal control over village affairs is held by all male descendants of the founding clan, up to the current village head (*raja huta*); he is the owner of the village [31].

3.2 Negotiating tradition and modernity: A case study of “*si soli-soli*” custom in village head elections

To elect a village head was formerly known as the *si soli-soli* custom, but since the colonial period and during the reign of the Republic of Indonesia, the village head election system was carried out directly in accordance with modern liberal values, namely one man one vote with a direct election system. However, because there was tension between the traditional knowledge of *si soli-soli* and the direct village head election system, traditional leaders in several villages tried to combine these two systems in the village head election. This mixing or syncretism is what researchers call hybridization which then gives birth to a hybrid culture.

Si soli-soli traditional knowledge is sometimes also called *ganti soring* whose philosophy means that in life every human being must give and receive. The behavior of giving and receiving is a basic human instinct. Another philosophy of traditional knowledge is that human life is always turning, like the wheel of fate which is also always turning. Likewise, the position of village head must be rotated fairly among the main clans that founded the village.

Historically and according to Toba Batak custom, the position of village head will be occupied by the founding clan in rotation. If the village of “Martabe”, for example, was established by four main clans at the beginning, then the four clans will hold deliberations to determine which clan will take office first in the first term and which clan will continue in the following period.

If several candidates for village heads appear in one of the main clans, then the internal clans will hold deliberations to agree on only one candidate. If there is no agreement, traditional knowledge called *manjomput na sinurat* is carried out, namely pulling the paper that reads “I am a Village Head Candidate” from the ballot box that has been prepared at the customary meeting. The lottery process is by inserting four ballot papers into the ballot box. Out of these four ballot papers, one sheet of ballot paper was marked with the words “I am a Village Head Candidate”, while the remaining three are blank ballots that have no writing on them. The four candidates were then given the opportunity to withdraw one ballot and the candidate who received the ballot with the words “I am a Village Head Candidate” will automatically advance to become the sole candidate.

Even though traditional knowledge is the basis for selecting village heads, the direct election of village heads as stipulated in the law is still carried out. The winner of the village head

election can be guessed, namely the candidate for village head who was decided through the traditional *si soli-soli* meeting. This system results in a more equitable political redistribution and guarantees a more peaceful election of village heads at the village level. So, the political philosophy in Toba Batak society in village head elections is that power and political resources must be divided fairly among the main clans that founded the village.

Thus, the circulation of the elite and the fair redistribution of power as the basis for the political and customary legacy of each of the village's main founding clans is maintained. Even so, this traditional knowledge has also experienced shocks, especially in outlying villages where the population of the village's founding clan is threatened by the massive presence of migrants working as traders or civil servants from outside North Tapanuli Regency. Migrants whose population is increasing are then oppose the *si soli-soli* traditional knowledge with the argument that in a democracy everyone has the right to be elected and vote. The hybrid culture between traditional knowledge of *si soli-soli* and the values of direct democracy, one man one vote, can be seen schematically in the Figure 3.

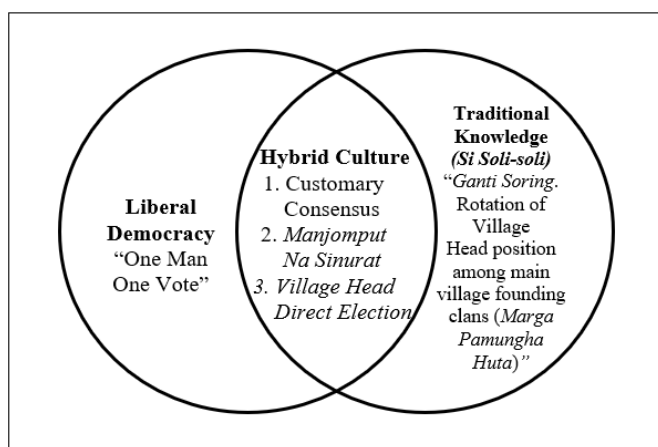


Figure 3. Hybrid culture on village head elections in north tapanuli regency

Development in Third World countries in general and developing countries in particular is experiencing a stalemate. Europe-centric modernization is seen as a new form of colonialism without considering the very heterogeneous cultural and religious contexts in this region. The failure of the modernization approach prompted some experts to campaign for “anti-development” and “beyond development” which later gave birth to post-development. Stuart cited Rist [9] concludes “that development is the problem [not the solution]-because its economic dream of abundance for all must result in imminent ecological catastrophe. It is time to leave and move from the realization of failure to an act of rejection of [development]”.

The failure of this modernization approach was also recognized by several multilateral and bilateral institutions which provided development prescriptions for the country of Timor Leste after more than a decade of independence and being separated from Indonesia, as reported by the international development agency AusAID in 2009 and UNDP reports in 2011 to 2014 as cited by Carroll-Bell [32], “hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOS), these practitioners have overseen the deployment of countless programs with the aim of improving livelihoods, building

capacity, and establishing basic services” (AusAID, 2009:4). Despite this sustained attention and funding, many of the desired outcomes have not materialized and a persistent series of human development challenges. The ‘problem’ lies with developmental orthodoxy and its incapacity to recognize and adapt to settings where customary systems of local authority, practice, and belief remain important to social cohesion remain.

Practitioners and heads of government must consider traditional knowledge in development so that development can be successful. This is important because traditional knowledge has for a long time been embedded and practiced in the social life of societies, local “ways of being”, or the different ways in which people see, understand, and engage with the world around them. “Recognizing and negotiating with locally bound forms of ritual and practice, these ‘alternate modes’ are a significant attempt to ‘re-imagine’ development praxis so as to ensure greater relevance, ownership, and control for local communities”. This development stalemate offers an alternative development by several experts. Iran, for example, opposes modernization and offers a post-development discourse which is better known as the concept of Gharbzadegi. “The Gharbzadegi discourse has been very influential in modern Iranian history and is seen as a ‘manifesto of anti-westernization’ [33].

The findings of this research support the theory used, namely that traditional knowledge contributes as a basis for political culture in village governance in particular and in village development in general. The traditional knowledge of “si soli-soli” (patrimonial deliberation) is still implemented in the election of several village heads in North Tapanuli Regency. This traditional knowledge is combined with direct election of village heads (modern democracy). So, there is a negotiation between traditional knowledge and modern values in the political system and culture of village head elections. This traditional knowledge gave birth to a more peaceful village head election and the elected village head had a moral obligation to maintain the dignity of his clan. Because he is the representative of his clan, the logical consequence is that he tries to lead fairly to all other clans with a credo, if he leads less or not well, then he humiliates his clan collectively. Because he is part of his clan, and his individual mistakes cannot be separated from the collective mistakes of his clan.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Negotiations between traditional knowledge and modernity are proven to have happened in the culture and political system of village government, especially in the village head election system. This hybrid culture in the election of village heads is perhaps an alternative development model because it is in accordance with the local cultural context in Batak land. Moreover, leadership at the village level in this area generally belongs to the main clan of the founder of the village. Indeed, it must be admitted that to a large degree, ethnicity is also not institutionalized in the sub-national governments (provinces and districts). As Cribb [34] has noted, several provinces are ‘both ethnically relatively coherent and more or less coterminous with the local dominant ethnic group’, and most of them are not portrayed by officials as being ethnic homelands”. Although the government at the provincial level does not describe the ethnic identity of the indigenous people, at the village level, the clan entity is very strong because the

main clans that establish villages will automatically become village heads. An informant said, at the higher levels of government such as the district level in the Lake Toba area, the main clan in North Tapanuli Regency such as the Hutabarat clan is unlikely to become a Regent in Samosir Regency. Vice versa, a member of the Simbolon, a main clan in Samosir Regency, will never be a Regent in North Tapanuli Regency.

As explained by Aspinal [35], ethnic affiliation with political parties (except the Aceh Party in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Province) is indeed not found in Indonesia so that ethnic politics is seen as less relevant. However, according to the researcher, this view is not appropriate when analyzing political entities at the village level. The political entities at the villages or forests in the Batak Toba community are still bound by traditional ties that become a reference in behaving in everyday life. Batak people at a certain level will be more subject to customary rules than state rules, even religious rules because Batak people will be embarrassed if they are called “uncivilized” people.

The policy implication of this research conclusion is the importance of recognizing traditional villages in the political culture of village government in North Tapanuli Regency in particular and in Indonesia in general. This recognition can be implemented in statutory policies regarding the recognition of traditional villages. This is important because Indonesia is very diverse, especially in terms of ethnic differentiation. It is also important to remember that the Indonesian state was born and gained independence in modern times, while the kingdoms in the archipelago have existed long before that. In Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages (better known as the Village Law) efforts to recognize traditional villages are encouraged, but the district government does not support this policy.

Therefore, the challenges and opportunities for further research on traditional knowledge in the future will be increasingly relevant and wide open. The focus area or research problem related to traditional knowledge that is interesting to research is first, the position and authority of the central government regarding the revitalization and glorification of indigenous communities in the unified state of the Republic of Indonesia. Second, monitoring and evaluating the fiscal decentralization of village funds and their contribution to village development after the implementation of the Village Law.

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