

Implementing Village Head Election in Madura: Balancing Democratization with Traditional Violence

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ABSTRACT

The Village Head Election (Pilkades) in Madura represents an intriguing political phenomenon, where the democratization process occurs within a strong local tradition. Although the Pilkades reflect the political participation of local communities in selecting their leaders, the reality on the ground indicates that this process is often marred by violence perpetrated by Blater. This study aims to examine the Pilkades in Madura by highlighting aspects of democratization and the factors that provoke conflict and violence at each election stage. The study found that intense political rivalry, kinship fanaticism, and local culture are the primary catalysts for violence during the Pilkades. Conversely, more effective law enforcement efforts and conflict resolution mechanisms are crucial for striking a balance between local democracy and social stability. Using a normative legal research, this article enhances the understanding of the relationship between Democratization and the culture of violence in the Pilkades in Madura. This research contributes to efforts to redesign the regulation of Pilkades in Madura by emphasising the prevention of violence in its implementation.

Introduction

Madura Island is part of Indonesia and consists of four districts, namely Sumenep, Pamekasan, Sampang, and Bangkalan, which have various cultural uniqueness.¹ Each village head election in Madura has various interesting facts that reflect the political and social dynamics of the local community.² Normatively, Pilkades is part of a democratic process that guarantees the community's right to elect leaders directly, freely, honestly, and fairly, as stipulated in the laws and

¹ Mukhlis Mukhlis et al., "The Legal Culture to Prevent Radical Islamism by a Pesantren in Madura," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 16, no. 1 (June 24, 2024): 58–87, <https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v16i1.26216>.

² Muchamad Ali Safa'at Arif Zainudin, Tunggal Anshari, and Riana Susmayanti, "Reconceptualizing The Dispute Resolution Model for Village Head Elections Towards Independent and Fair Elections," *Audito Comparative Law Journal* 6, no. 1 (2025).

regulations related to village governance.³ However, in practice, this process is often characterised by acts of violence, intimidation and horizontal conflict, which undermine democratic values and threaten public order and security.⁴

Conflicts in Pilkades are caused by the inability of regulations to prevent conflict and violence. Many provisions in the regulations on Pilkades are overly general and fail to consider local socio-cultural dynamics.⁵ As a result, the applicable regulations cannot answer specific needs in regions with unique characteristics, such as Madura, which has a complex and conflict-prone political and cultural background. Therefore, due to this regulatory imbalance, efforts must be made to ensure that legal certainty in the implementation of Pilkades in Madura is strongly guaranteed within existing laws.⁶

No less important in implementing the Pilkades is the availability of regulations, which can provide significant authority to the Pilkades committee formed by the village head and the Village Consultative Body (BPD), along with a strict monitoring mechanism. It is at this stage that opportunities and chances for certain individuals to abuse their authority and engage in political intervention in the candidate selection process and the technical implementation of the election arise.

Essentially, village planning must be based on the principle of good governance, which is a crucial aspect in the context of safeguarding democracy.⁷ In the context of implementing village democratisation, the presence of village head elections is an essential aspect in measuring the quality of democratic community life because village head elections are considered the most real arena of democracy in the village scope. Throughout its implementation process, it embodies democratic freedom through community participation, utilising direct elections, a principle known as one man, one vote.⁸

³ Sri Hartini, Aji Sudarsono, and Sukaris Sukaris, "Pemetaan Wisatawan Domestik Pada Destinasi Wisata Di Provinsi Jawa Timur," *MANAJERIAL* 7, no. 01 (January 13, 2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.30587/jurnalmanajerial.v7i01.1113>.

⁴ Jenny Pearce, Rosemary McGee, and Joanna Wheeler, "Violence, Security and Democracy: Perverse Interfaces and Their Implications for States and Citizens in the Global South," *IDS Working Papers* 2011, no. 357 (February 21, 2011): 01–37, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2040-0209.2011.00357_2.x.

⁵ Haryanto, Andi Ilmi Utami Irwan, and Yusriah Amaliah, "Elections, Governance, and Polarization in Indonesian Villages," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 32, no. 2 (May 3, 2024): 175–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02185377.2024.2351400>.

⁶ Yanwar Pribadi, "The Klebun, the Kiai and the Blater: Notes from Western Madura, Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 23, no. 3 (September 18, 2015): 303–17, <https://doi.org/10.5367/sear.2015.0267>.

⁷ Rita Ambarwati et al., "The Implications of Good Governance of Village Government Office in Sidoarjo," *Binus Business Review* 10, no. 3 (November 2019): 147–58, <https://doi.org/10.21512/bbr.v10i3.5683>.

⁸ Moh. Ikmal and Mohammad Arifin, "Anarkisme Politik Di Aras Lokal (Peran 'Bandit' Politik Dalam Pilkades Di Kabupaten Sumenep)," *Jurnal Ilmu Politik Dan Pemerintahan* 6, no. 2 (October 2020): 123–52, <https://doi.org/10.37058/jipp.v6i2.2219.a>

The application of democratic principles can provide space to guarantee the fulfilment of civil and political rights broadly as guaranteed in the constitution.⁹ However, it should be realised that democratisation in the Pilkades in Madura can open up space for social fragmentation in society. In practice, many practical political efforts are implemented in every implementation of the Pilkades in Madura. This phenomenon encourages a shift in orientation, so that community participation is coerced into a form of political participation that does not uphold democracy. One such practice is the use of money politics, which often influences the electoral mechanism in democracy.¹⁰ Not only that, at the local level, specifically in the election of village heads, many actors have emerged who possess physical power (Blater) to intimidate and even carry out violent practices, with the primary mission and goal of perpetuating power at the village government level.

This problem is an ongoing challenge in the implementation of the Pilkades on Madura. Efforts to represent democratic values that are expressly stated in the law are only things that are often ignored.¹¹ The decline of democratic values is a major challenge for all elements of Madurese society, which, of course, must be addressed by the government at both regional and central levels.

In this literature, the author presents a new perspective on the role of Blater in the implementation of village head elections in Madura. Whereas previous literature only focused on phenomena that occurred in several regions, for example, the literature studied by Siti Rohmatul Ainillah (2016) specifically examined the existence of political elites in political contestation in Banjar Village, Bangkalan Regency.¹² In addition to the literature, several studies also discuss the polemic of Blater in the implementation of village head elections on Madura Island, but not many have explicitly explored how the social status and heroism of Blater transformed into social capital to lead formally as a *kelebon* (village head).

The author will also examine in depth how the history and dynamics of implementing village head elections and the role of Blater can assimilate or even influence the structure of modern government. Therefore, here the author attempts to fill the gap by situating Blater in two dimensions simultaneously, namely as a cultural figure who holds informal power (based on social status and heroism) and as a formal leader within the village government system. Previous studies have not extensively explored this approach.

⁹ La Ode Haerul Saleh Wahid, "Perlindungan Ideal Atas Hak Dipilih Warga Negara Yang Berprofesi Sebagai Pegawai Negeri Sipil," *AL-MANHAJ: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pranata Sosial Islam* 5, no. 2 (July 2023): 1175–86, <https://doi.org/10.37680/almanhaj.v5i2.3433>.

¹⁰ Edward Aspinall and Noor Rohman, "Village Head Elections in Java: Money Politics and Brokerage in the Remaking of Indonesia's Rural Elite," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 48, no. 1 (February 26, 2017): 31–52, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463416000461>.

¹¹ Thomas Riis, "A Model of 'Rough Justice' for Internet Intermediaries from the Perspective of EU Copyright Law," *Computer Law & Security Review* 56 (April 2025): 106094, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clsr.2024.106094>.

¹² Siti Rohmatul Ainillah, "Elite Politik Dalam Kontenstasi Di Desa Dengan Menggunakan Studi Peran Blater Dalam Pilkades Di Desa Banjar, Galis, Bangkalan Madura," *Jurnal Politik Muda* 5, no. 3 (2016).

Most of the previous literature uses the term Blater, which is predominantly only used in western Madura (Sampang and Bangkalan), without highlighting Blater as a typical figure of eastern Madura (Sumenep and Pamekasan), which shows a void in literature in the regional context of Madura itself. Therefore, the author in this literature will review it in more depth by paying attention to the environment of the four regencies at once.

The novelty of this narrative lies in its holistic approach, which places Blater in two dimensions simultaneously: as cultural figures with informal power based on social status, and as formal leaders within the local government structure at the village level. Unlike previous literature that tends to focus on the role of Blater in the context of local politics in specific areas, such as Bangkalan and Sampang, this study broadens the scope by examining the role of Blater throughout Madura, including Sumenep and Pamekasan, which have been minimally discussed.

In addition, this study offers a new perspective on how the social status and heroism of Blater transform into social capital in formal leadership, which ultimately enables it to assimilate into the modern government structure at the village level. By comprehensively highlighting the dynamics of history and the development of Pilkades, this study not only fills the gap in local political studies in Madura but also enriches the understanding of the interaction between informal power and the formal government system at the village level.

Methods

This research method uses a normative study approach that focuses on the theoretical analysis of issues related to democratisation and the tradition of violence in the implementation of Pilkades in Madura. This normative approach was chosen because it is in accordance with the research objectives to be achieved, namely, to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of relevant rules, norms, and theoretical frameworks, without collecting primary data in the field. As a normative study, this research has limitations related to primary data collection. The absence of empirical data from the field can limit the ability to provide more contextual and specific insights into violence in village head elections in Madura. However, this deficiency is offset by the in-depth theoretical analysis supported by various academic literature that can be accounted for.

Discussion

The History of Pilkades in Madura and its Culture of Violence

When discussing the history of Pilkades in Madura, it cannot be separated from the violence that seems to be a symbol of dispute resolution in Madura. The election of village heads, a form of democracy and representation that allows village

communities to choose their leaders,¹³ is often marred by various elements of violence. Certain groups or factions typically engage in these violent practices.

These factions have different names in several areas in Madura. One of them is Blater. Blater himself is a strong person in Madura, both physically and spiritually, and is usually known to have invulnerability and *kanuragaan* knowledge.¹⁴ Blater has a strong position in Madurese society, even its position is equal to kiai.¹⁵ So the dynamics of the village head election cannot be separated from the influence of Blater. Blater is also closely related to the *carok* event. The process of *carok* during the Dutch colonial era in Madura involved complex social, political and cultural dynamics.

During the Dutch colonial era, the election system began to undergo significant changes towards a more organised direction, including the election of village heads, which were no longer subject to colonial approval.¹⁶ However, the influence of community habits remains present in the dynamics of elections in Madura, which, of course, stems from individuals who have a high economic and social impact, such as religious figures known as Kiai and heroes referred to as Blater, or in certain areas.¹⁷ After Indonesia's independence, including in the Madura region, the village head election system began to shift in a more significant direction, as evidenced by the emergence of more formal regulations and other measures that uphold the community's rights.¹⁸

However, in practice, the election of village heads can still not be entirely avoided due to non-democratic factors, such as money politics and conflicts of interest. This is exacerbated by the presence of Blater as a figure who is feared in society, so that they are prone to violence in cases of different opinions. In the context of the village head election contest in Madura, Blater, who is part of the Madurese village elite, has full influence in every policy related to the election of village heads.¹⁹

Democratisation and the Tradition of Violence in the Pilkades in Madura

¹³ Eugenia Brandao Da Silva and Lin Asyiqoh, "The Idea of Legal Pluralism in Dispute Resolution of Village Head Election in Madura," *Journal of Indonesian Constitutional Law* 1, no. 1 (2024): 61–83, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.71239/jicl.v1i1.22>.

¹⁴ Arif Zainudin, Anshari, and Susmayanti, "Reconceptualizing The Dispute Resolution Model For Village Head Elections Towards Independent And Fair Elections."

¹⁵ Ach. Khoiri et al., "The Role of Kiai and Blater in the Regional Election in Madura: Discourse on Legal Culture," *Trunojoyo Law Review* 6, no. 2 (2024): 211–33, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21107/tr.v6i2.23894>.

¹⁶ Achmad Jamaludin Karim, "Kepemimpinan Wanita Madura," *Journal Sosial Dan Pembangunan* 23, no. 2 (2007), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.29313/mimbar.v23i2.242>.

¹⁷ Safi' et al., *Bhag-Rembhag Sabhala'an as a Method of Resolving Religious Conflicts in the Madura Legal Tradition*, El-Mashlahah, vol. 14, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.23971/el-mashlahah.v14i1.7819>.

¹⁸ Mashuri Maschab, *Politik Pemerintahan Desa Di Indonesia*, ed. Utan Parlindungan Rachmad Gustomy, 1st ed. (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Polgov, 2013).

¹⁹ Mohammad Hidayaturrehman et al., "Blater's Power in Local Politics, Village Head Election in Madura," *Jurnal Inovasi Ilmu Sosial Dan Politik (JISoP)* 5, no. 2 (January 9, 2024): 163–70, <https://doi.org/10.33474/jisop.v5i2.20562>.

Villages are the forerunners of political society and government formation in Indonesia, as they existed before the formation of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Therefore, the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, in Article 18B, paragraphs (1) and (2), provides recognition and guarantees for traditional rights and the unity of customary law communities that have a special position in the implementation of government, especially in the village scope. The diversity of characteristics and types of villages in Madura is not a problem for the state to continue to provide protection and recognition for the unity of the legal community and customary law communities.²⁰ Thus, the constitutional rights inherent in each person are still respected and maintained as part of a fair and transparent government system.

Democratisation at the village level reflects the community's desire to participate in determining the direction of local government. Village head elections enable the community to play an active role in selecting village leaders who are considered capable of bringing about positive change.²¹ This mechanism is a symbol that democratic values have begun to be accepted by rural communities, including in Madura. However, the practice of democracy in Madura is not free from problems, such as politicisation by local elites, mass mobilisation, and minimal supervision of violations of the election process.

The principles of democratic political practice can begin in village life. The essential elements of democracy can be actualised in the institutions of political life at the smallest level of formal government. According to Robert Dahl, a political scientist, there are three main principles of implementing democracy, namely 1) competition, 2) participation, and 3) political and civil freedom. One of the significant challenges of democratisation in the village scope is the spread of money politics in the Pilkades and the tradition of violence in it.²²

The dynamics of local politics in rural areas can illustrate the democratization process at the grassroots level of Indonesian society. This can be seen in village heads' elections on Madura's island, especially in Sumenep Regency, Guluk-Guluk sub-district, Karangsokon village. Many groups are components in the democratic process in rural Madura. Groups of Kiai, Blater, bosses, gamblers, and bettors have various interests in the village head election process.²³

²⁰ Eugenia Brandao Da Silva et al., "A Model of Election Supervision Based on Village Judicial Institutions; A Review of Legal Anthropology in Madura," *Trunojoyo Law Review* 6, no. 1 (February 28, 2024): 96–119, <https://doi.org/10.21107/tr.v6i1.23230>.

²¹ Rini Armianti Berutu and Julia Ivanna, "Peran Generasi Muda Dalam Pemilihan Kepala Desa Di Desa Kaban Tengah Kecamatan STU Jehe Kabupaten Pakpak Bharat," *Journal on Education* 6, no. 4 (2024).

²² Erma Rusdiana et al., "Preventing the Politicisation of Corruption Crime Law Enforcement Based on Local Wisdom," *Legality: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum* 33, no. 1 (January 21, 2025): 110–31, <https://doi.org/10.22219/ljih.v33i1.37429>.

²³ Marjono Jamaluddin, Kayan Swastika, "Potret Demokrasi Arus Bawah: Studi Kasus Pemilihan Kepala Desa Di Desa Karangsokon Kecamatan Guluk-Guluk Kabupaten Sumenep Tahun 2012," 2014.

After the village head elections, violence often occurs. This is because there are parties that cannot accept defeat in the village head election, so they vent their anger in various forms of violence and disturb the peace of society. The important role of these Blater is as one of the groups that tries to seek a lot of support and votes from the local village community, either through violence or by providing security guarantees to the local community, in addition, the Blater function to guard the houses of residents who are claimed to have expressed their support for a particular candidate.

This phenomenon often has implications for the numerous conflicts that arise before and after the election. On the other hand, the Blater became a symbol of the silencing of the democratic rights of rural communities in Madura because Blater often spread threats against individuals or certain groups when they did not want to support the candidate they had nominated.²⁴

The relationship between democracy and the culture of violence in Madura creates a unique dynamic. Modern democracy emphasises dialogue, transparency, and peaceful conflict resolution.²⁵ But local traditions in Madura uphold the defence of self-esteem, which often leads to violence. This reflects the tension between democratic values and the local culture, which is deeply rooted on Madura Island.²⁶

Dynamics of Pilkades in Madura

A village is a legal community that has its territorial boundaries and authority, which have been legally recognised by law.²⁷ This authority includes regulating and managing government affairs, as well as community interests based on community initiatives, original rights, and/or traditional rights that are recognised and respected within the government system of the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia.²⁸ Historically, village communities have been the forerunners of the formation of political and governmental communities, whose existence is crucial in governance in

²⁴ Yudi Widagdo Harimurti et al., “Democratic Education on the Village Consultative Body Election in Bangkalan,” *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 11, no. 2 (2020): 84–110, <https://doi.org/jsser.org/index.php/jsser/article/view/2020>.

²⁵ Ainun Najib et al., “Regulation on Freedom of Expression on Social Media in Indonesia and Malaysia,” *Journal of Indonesian Constitutional Law* 1, no. 1 (2024): 46–60, <https://doi.org/https://ejournal.pustakaparawali.com/index.php/jicl/article>.

²⁶ Mohammad Nurul Huda et al., “Criminal Law Formulation Against Underage Child Marriage,” *Trunojoyo Law Review* 5, no. 2 (August 29, 2023): 144–60, <https://doi.org/10.21107/tr.v5i2.20925>.

²⁷ Anang Wahyu Kurnianto and Ridwanto Ardi Kusumo, “Recall on Village Heads Election: An Election Law Reform,” *Journal of Law and Legal Reform* 1, no. 2 (January 13, 2020): 201–14, <https://doi.org/10.15294/jllr.v1i2.35406>.

²⁸ Bambang Adhi Pamungkas, “Pelaksanaan Otonomi Desa Pasca Undang-Undang Nomor 6 Tahun 2014 Tentang Desa,” *Jurnal Usm Law Review* 2, no. 2 (November 20, 2019): 210, <https://doi.org/10.26623/julr.v2i2.2271>.

Indonesia. Villages are included in autonomous institutions, which, with their customs and traditions, are relatively independent.²⁹

The existence of the Pilkades further encourages the spirit of increasing democratisation throughout Indonesia and enhancing regional autonomy.³⁰ Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs (Permendagri) No. 112 of 2014 concerning the Election of Village Heads was made to strengthen Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, Articles 2 and 3.

The Permendagri is closely related to the election of village heads, which can be carried out simultaneously or in waves. However, what is interesting about the implementation of the simultaneous Pilkades is Article 23, which stipulates that the number of village head candidates must be at least 2 and a maximum of 5, as determined by the election committee.³¹ Although in reality, the implementation of these regulations is often ignored by village government officials, especially on Madura, who usually perpetuate power in an undemocratic manner, even by using physical violence by utilising Blater for other dirty practices. In essence, power is not a possession but a strategy.³² This means that those who have power and knowledge can generate power relations. Power is not a sole possession in the hands of one party or one particular group. So, when there is absolute power, someone can exercise their power over other people thoroughly.³³

In the context above, the influence (or control) of individuals or groups over other individuals or groups can occur through the formation of perceptions of the situation.³⁴ The existence of the term Blater, which is a structure of perception by people who have physical abilities and are equipped with martial arts skills that are almost feared, respected and even revered. In the culture of Madurese society, the phenomenon of Blater is commonplace and is found in nearly the entire Madura region.

The mention of Blater gangs in several places is different, as they originated from the people's resistance movement against colonial power and local rulers who

²⁹ YanaKusnadi Srijadi Ari Wibowo, "Tinjauan Hukum Terhadap Kedudukan Desa Dalam Kerangka Otonomi Desa Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 20, no. 4 (2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32816/paramarta.v20i4.132>.

³⁰ Agus Sukristyanto, "Governor Election And Political Participation In East Java," in *Proceedings of the 2018 Annual Conference of Asian Association for Public Administration: "Reinventing Public Administration in a Globalized World: A Non-Western Perspective" (AAPA 2018)* (Paris, France: Atlantis Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.2991/aapa-18.2018.52>.

³¹ D. S. Kartini, "Demokrasi Dan Pengawasan Pemilu," *Journal Of Governance* 2, no. 2 (2017): 149.

³² Mohammad Hidayatullah et al., "Political Clientelism in Presidential Elections and Political History in Madura," in *The First Annual International Conference on Social, Literacy, Art, History, Library, and Information Science (ICOLIS)* (Dubai, United Arab Emirates: KnE Social Sciences, 2024), 42–55, <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v9i12.15814>.

³³ Mangihut Siregar, "Kritik Terhadap Teori Kekuasaan-Pengetahuan Foucault," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik* 1, no. 1 (July 2021), <https://doi.org/10.30742/juispol.v1i1.1560>.

³⁴ Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Lessons from Madura: NU, Conservatism and the 2019 Presidential Election," *Perspective*, no. 72 (2019): 1–9, <https://doi.org/www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/>.

often caused misery in Madura.³⁵ It is not surprising that in the last few decades, there have been several *carok* incidents or cases of slashing that have occurred on the island of Madura, whose causes and effects began with the village head elections. The author summarises several cases that occurred in the following table:

Table 1. Carok in the Pilkades in Madura

<i>Carok Case</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>News Source</i>
the slashing of the village head of Karang Gayam, Blega,	2017	Bangkalan	https://jatim.antaranews.com/berita/197579/motif-pembunuhan-di-blega-bangkalan-karena-pilkades
Slashing due to differences in political choices	2019	Pamekasan	https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20190422065256-20388338/beda-pilihan-politik-pemilu-warga-di-pamekasan-saling-bacok
Village head candidate in Pamekasan hacked while riding pillion with his wife	2022	Pamekasan	https://www.detik.com/jatim/hukum-dan-kriminal/d-5966598/calon-kepala-desa-di-pamekasan-dibacok-orang-tak-dikenal-saat-bonceng-istri
The head of the Modung village head election committee was hacked for not passing one of the village head candidate pairs	2023	Bangkalan	https://regional.kompas.com/read/2023/03/17/202133478/tak-lolos-jadi-calon-kades-pria-di-bangkalan-bacok-ketua-panitia-pemilihan
One of the residents of Sotabar Village, Pasean District, Pamekasan Regency, was killed by his friend because of differences in choice in the village head election.	2022	Pamekasan	https://surabaya.kompas.com/read/2022/04/22/221030978/diduga-gara-gara-beda-pilihan-pendukung-cakades-di-pamekasan-ditebas-pakai
slashing by unknown persons using a sickle and three people were critical due to the village head election conflict	2023	Bangkalan	https://www.detik.com/jatim/hukum-dan-kriminal/d-6658010/dua-pembacok-tiga-orang-terkait-konflik-pilkades-bangkalan-ditangkap

Source: Compiled by the author based on several references

From the data above, we can conclude that the perception that every implementation of the Pilkades in several Madura Regencies is often colored by chaos and even violence.³⁶ However, in a democratic legal state, as adopted by the Indonesian Nation, democracy and the highest power are in the hands of the people. Therefore, it is fitting that the people have full control over determining and electing

³⁵ Muwaffiq Jufri et al., "Religion and State in Islamic Constitutional Law: The Role of Pesantren in Strengthening Symbiotic Islam and The State in Madura," *Justicia Islamica: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Dan Sosial* 21, no. 2 (2024): 221–46, <https://doi.org/10.21154/justicia.v21i2.9283>.

³⁶ Muhammad Dzikri Akbar Syafi'i, Firman Arif Pribadi, and Saiful Abdullah, "Criminal Conviction of Child Traffic Offenders Reviewed From The Juvenile Criminal Justice System," *Trunojoyo Law Review* 4, no. 1 (2022): 53–67, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21107/tlr.v4i1.16235>.

their representatives at the village government level, without resorting to violence or intimidation.

Dualism of the Role of Village Head in Madura

A government can run well and optimally when the constitution's mandate implements people's sovereignty properly.³⁷ This is a form of democracy adopted in Indonesia, where the people have full rights to determine their representatives who sit in government, including village-level government, as mandated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.³⁸ Article 1, paragraph (2), namely that sovereignty lies in the hands of the people and is implemented based on the Constitution.³⁹

Therefore, sovereignty, which is fully controlled by the people, must be actualised by increasing legal awareness, which is built upon and followed by the existence of norms that evolve in the life of society and must not conflict with the law.⁴⁰ To prevent and anticipate the tradition of violence in the implementation of village head elections and uphold democracy. The existence of violent acts such as *carok* or vigilante justice is a wrong legal culture. Violent acts in village head elections in Madura are often used as a shortcut to resolving disputes in Pilkades, aiming to achieve justice, even though, according to applicable legal norms, conflicts can be resolved through litigation without violence or intimidation. This problem is the weak point of the democratic system in Madura.

The legitimacy that arises from the figure of Blater in the implementation of Pilkades in Madura is not only based on democratic mechanisms through voting but also on the social capital that they have built in society. As figures who have a strong influence based on social status and heroism, Blater often become symbols of protection and leadership at the local level, so that their presence in village political contests gets support not only because of electoral factors, but also because of collective trust that has been built up from generation to generation.⁴¹

³⁷ Liane Colonna, "The End of Open Source? Regulating Open Source under the Cyber Resilience Act and the New Product Liability Directive," *Computer Law & Security Review* 56 (April 2025): 106105, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clsr.2024.106105>.

³⁸ Putra Perdana Ahmad Saifulloh et al., "Political Dynasties in General Elections According to Human Rights and A Comparison in Four ASEAN Countries," *Trunojoyo Law Review* 7, no. 123–160 (2025), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21107/tr.v7i1.28492>.

³⁹ Encik Muhammad Fauzan and Ariyanti Arifta, "The Arrangement of Child Protection Institutions in Indonesia Based on The 1945 Indonesian Constitution," *Trunojoyo Law Review* 2, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 26–43, <https://doi.org/10.21107/tr.v2i1.9494>.

⁴⁰ Lawrence O Gostin et al., "The Legal Determinants of Health: Harnessing the Power of Law for Global Health and Sustainable Development," *The Lancet* 393, no. 10183 (May 2019): 1857–1910, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(19\)30233-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)30233-8).

⁴¹ Saut Panggabean Sinaga Haris, Afrizal Akbar, Ilham Prisgunanto, "Pencegahan Kejahatan Fungsi Bhabinkamtibmas Terhadap Tingkat Kesadaran Hukum Kasus Carok Pada Pemilihan Kepala Desa Dikaitkan Dengan Harga Diri Kolektif Masyarakat," *Journal Portofolio* 3, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.70704/jpjm.v3i2.266>.

In many cases, their victory in the Pilkades is not merely the result of conventional political strategies but also a reflection of the social ties they have with the residents, where loyalty and patronage are key elements in strengthening their position as *Klebun* (village head). Thus, the legitimacy they obtain comes not only from the formal aspects of the election but also from the social recognition that has been deeply ingrained in the structure of village society.⁴²

The phenomenon of Blater in the social realm of Madurese society presents a complex reality regarding the relationship between two distinct contexts: the power of local culture and the formal government structure. The existence of this figure is not merely a traditional cultural one (socio-cultural), but also emerges as an actor in the formal system of village government (structural-formal).

In the socio-cultural framework, Blater is present as a figure who inherits high social status through family lineage and is strengthened by the value of *jagoan* (heroism)-namely courage, charisma, and a symbol of physical strength that fosters authority in the eyes of the community, it is not surprising that his existence is often respected by the surrounding community. This image has been firmly embedded in the local Madurese value system, making Blater a respected and even feared figure. This honour is an ascribed status- a social position received based on descent and culture.⁴³

However, interestingly, this symbolic power does not stop at the symbolic level. Blater has successfully converted this social and cultural capital into a structural position in the formal government system. This means that power that was originally informal now has formal legitimacy from the state, indicating a shift from traditional authority to legal-rational authority (although still wrapped in local cultural nuances).⁴⁴

This is what makes it interesting, namely the emergence of dualism of roles that are not dichotomous, but instead complement and strengthen each other. The figure of Blater does not experience conflict between traditional values and modern systems but instead combines the two to maintain its sociopolitical dominance. In practice, the community still sees Blater as a culture-based protector figure, but administratively, they also recognise his authority as the legitimate leader of the village government.⁴⁵ However, this concept is not entirely correct according to

⁴² Haya Haya, "Resolusi Konflik Pilkades Di Madura," *Jurnal Sosial Dan Keagamaan* 9, no. 2 (2020).

⁴³ Sekar Anggun Gading Pinilih, "Model of Village Head Election Arrangement in Village Governance Law," *Jurnal Dinamika Hukum* 17, no. 2 (May 31, 2017): 146, <https://doi.org/10.20884/1.jdh.2017.17.2.789>.

⁴⁴ Ach. Baihaki, "Komunikasi Simbolik Dalam Menentukan Harga Perolehan Jabatan Kepala Desa Di Madura," *Akuntansi: Jurnal Akuntansi Integratif* 9, no. 1 (August 2023): 62–90, <https://doi.org/10.29080/jai.v9i1.1086>.

⁴⁵ Raden Bagus Mochammad Ramadhan Razief Hafid, Sahrudin, and Ahmad Farid, "Countermeasures for Environmental Damage Caused by Drilling Water Sources for The Mineral Water Industry," *Journal of Indonesian Constitutional Law* 1, no. 2 (2024): 140–50, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.71239/jicl.v1i2.36>.

applicable law. However, this culture cannot be separated from the culture of Madurese society.⁴⁶

This perspective shows that the local political system at the village level is not purely fixed through formal procedural mechanisms alone, but also the cultural legitimacy inherent in the figure of the local figure.⁴⁷ So that in practice the existence of Blater will be a bridge between the state structure and the structure of the customary community, this is what shows that in the cultural politics of a society like Madura, formal authority, even though it is regulated in the existing legal system, often has to obtain legitimacy from the socio-cultural structure that is already rooted in the political culture on the island of Madura.

For the author himself, in the context of the duality of Blater, this is not a contradiction but rather a collaborative synergy between two different systems of power: one based on state rules, one based on cultural influences. Thus, Blater emerges as a figure that represents the process of localisation of formal power, where the state is present through a figure previously accepted by Madurese society culturally.

Pilkades in Madura: Prestigious Position as a Symbol of Victory

In Madura, Pilkades is not just an administrative election. Still, it has become an arena for betting on self-esteem—a matter of *maloh* (shame) that touches on the most fundamental side of the community's value system. Becoming a *Klebun* is not only about a structural position recognised by law and democratic regulations at the regional government level, but is a symbol of honour, power, and social legitimacy that has prestigious value in Madurese society.⁴⁸

In the local context, *Klebun* is a symbol of the highest leadership in the village, more than just a formal position. It is a representation of socio-cultural power, a guardian of community honour, as well as a respected protective figure. So it is not surprising that the Pilkades contest often turns into a symbolic field sensitive to self-esteem issues (*maloh*).

The phrase "Pilkades in Madura is a *maloh* affair" reflects the reality that victory or defeat in the Pilkades is not only measured by the number of votes, but also by the dignity and social position at stake. Anyone who runs, especially from the local elite such as Blater, carries the burden of family honour, community, and even cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation.

⁴⁶ Eni Syafitri and Agus Machfud Fauzi, "Blater Power Relation as a Symbol in the Political Seat Battle in Bangkalan," in Proceedings of the International Joint Conference on Arts and Humanities 2021 (IJCAH 2021) (Paris, France, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211223.143>.

⁴⁷ Sugiyanto and Farhan Kamil, "Authority of the Bunder Village Government in Improving the Quality of Village Education," *Trunojoyo Law Review* 4, no. 114–122 (2022), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21107/tr.v4i2.18118>.

⁴⁸ Aliya Hamida Hamida, Aminah Dewi Rahmawati, and Hetti Mulyaningsih, "Women's Empowerment in Madura Villages: Examining Female Resistance within the Patriarchal Power Structure and Political Dynasties," *PCD Journal* 11, no. 1 (January 2024): 1–34, <https://doi.org/10.22146/pcd.v11i1.9136>.

In Madura, the Pilkades is not only a process of selecting candidates for village leaders but also a prestigious symbol related to self-esteem for those running in the Pilkades contest.⁴⁹ This is closely related to the figures in Madura; these figures are known as *Buppa*, *Babu*, *Gburu*, and *Rato* (Father, Mother, Teacher and Government Leader). In these figures, the hierarchy of Madurese society is manifested in social and cultural life.⁵⁰

This obedience becomes a normative rule that is binding for the Madurese community. Any deliberate disregard for this rule will result in social and cultural sanctions. In this case, the village head is included in the fourth element, namely *Rato* (government leader). In this context, the village head holds an important position and role in the Madurese community, making the *Klebun* a prestigious position that is widely contested by prospective village heads.⁵¹

The prestige of the village head position in Madura is not only related to the formal position but also serves as an arena for social recognition and a symbol of pride that is fiercely contested, making the village head position a target for candidates in various regions of Madura. This is like a double-edged sword; on the one hand, its prestige encourages candidates' enthusiasm for participating in the political contest, but on the other hand, it will inevitably lead to a violent polemic in the election process.

Regarding the above, the village head election process is often marred by massive violence due to the intense competition in the election contest.⁵² The existence of this tight competition increases the potential for violence during the election event. This violence can be in the form of intimidation, defamation of other candidates, or even in the form of physical clashes that result in fatalities.

The position of *Klebun* in Madura is not typically chosen based on the intellectual capacity of the village head candidate, but rather on the economic and social strength they possess. The significant costs in the nomination process are capital that must be paid by the candidate.⁵³ Meanwhile, the candidate's social position will enhance their strength when competing against other candidates. So,

⁴⁹ Ranarosyidah Rihadatul'Asy, "Supervision of Village Fund Management by the Regional Inspectorate of Pamekasan Regency," *Decova Law Journal* 1, no. 1 (2025): 18–27, <https://ejournal.pustakaparawali.com/index.php/dlj/article/view/55>.

⁵⁰ Taufiqurrahman, "Identitas Budaya Madura," *Karsa* 11, no. 1 (2007): 11.

⁵¹ Erga Yuhandra and Gios Adhyaksa, "Disputes Settlement on the Village Head Election (A Study on Positive Law and Local Wisdom)," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Law, Economics and Health (ICLEH 2020)* (Paris, France: Atlantis Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.200513.017>.

⁵² Mary Kaldor and Robin Luckham, "Global Transformations and New Conflicts," *IDS Bulletin* 32, no. 2 (April 2001): 48–69, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2001.mp32002005.x>.

⁵³ Bambang Sumantri, Ane Nor Cahya Ilmiah, and Salfanil Farizi, "Fulfillment of the Constitutional Rights for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities in General Elections," *Journal of Indonesian Constitutional Law* 1, no. 3 (December 16, 2024): 176–93, <https://doi.org/10.71239/jicl.v1i3.28>.

the dynamics of selecting *Klebun* candidates on Madura Island are based on the strength of their economic position and social status.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The history of Pilkades in Madura demonstrates that the democratic process at the village level cannot be separated from the social and cultural dynamics that evolve within society. The culture of violence that often colours Pilkades in Madura reflects how local political competition can lead to prolonged physical and social conflict. This phenomenon is not only influenced by political and economic factors but also by social and cultural values rooted in the lives of the Madurese people.

To create a more peaceful and democratic election process, collective efforts are needed from various parties, including the government, community leaders, and law enforcement agencies, to build a more transparent and equitable election system. Political education and approaches rooted in local wisdom are also crucial in reducing the potential for violence in every village-level political contest. Thus, it is hoped that future Pilkades in Madura will be more conducive, reflect a healthy democratic spirit, and uphold democratic values that have long been rooted in the motherland.

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⁵⁴ Aminah Dewi Rahmawati and Kuntum Chairum Ummah, "Representasi Kepemimpinan Klebun Perempuan Di Madura: Upaya Menuju Kepemimpinan Perempuan Mandiri," *Resiprokal: Jurnal Riset Sosiologi Progresif Aktual* 5, no. 2 (December 2023): 174–83, <https://doi.org/10.29303/resiprokal.v5i2.411>.

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