

Charismatic leadership in local politics: A study of the political articulation of power in Kalipare, Malang Regency

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Abstract: This article examines the practice of political articulation of power carried out by a Village Head during their leadership. The practice of articulating power is ethical but also political because the public understands that what is done is a sign of power politics that can be said to be "unique" and anti-mainstream. In the current political tradition, community improvement actions are often carried out because of disappointment or dissatisfaction with someone's leadership. On the contrary, in Malang, there was mass action, but they forced the incumbent to be willing to advance again in the political contestation in the second period of the election. This study aims to reveal the meaning of the practice of power articulation that becomes a political practice. This study uses a qualitative method with a purposive sampling technique on four informants whom the researchers chose based on data validity. Therefore, several research results were found using qualitative research analysis, data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions, including 1) *blusukan* and absorbing aspirations, 2) light-hearted leaders, and 3) leaders of the people. From here, the markers of charismatic leadership were articulated by Gaguk during his tenure as the village head of Kaliarsi Village.

1. Introduction

In the context of democracy, the community is positioned as a civil society to control the performance of a particular government so that what is taken or decided can be openly corrected by the public. From this point on, the implementation of the concept of good governance takes place in a democratic space. Democracy is referred to by (Schumpeter, 2003) It concludes that liberal democracy is modern humanity's final form of governance. In a sense, state power is not based on natural or supernatural rights but on the desire of the sovereign people (Prianto, 2022).

Democracy is in tandem with the principles of liberalism, where everyone must respect the outcome of collective decisions, not because they are just, good, or right, but rather because they are the result of procedures that are considered equitable (Gyorfi, 2013). However, democracy emphasises procedural matters (Pereira, 2000). Despite this, in reality, many scholars feel considerable scepticism towards democracy as a system of government (Weale, 1999). Indeed, modern democracy arose alongside capitalism and in line with the principle of the autonomous individual in economic terms, so capitalism

is positively linked to democracy, a range of values, and culture (Almond & Schumpeter, 2012). This is where capitalism can grow at dawn amid a democratic regime. Conceptually, politics is understood as "who gets what, when, how, in which implies that every autonomous individual has the right to contest for and retain power (office) at all levels of organisational life (Peters, 2004). This is because politics has a dimension of interest, so it is plural and not limited to ideology (Dwinugraha, 2020; Zulganef & Nilasari, 2022).

In the current literature, after the collapse of the Soviet Union around the 1990s, democracy is termed by Samuel P Huntington as the end of humanity's political practice, especially in third-world nations (Roper, 2013). Hence, it is not an exaggeration if almost all countries claim to have implemented a democratic system. From here, the democratic regime creates the attitudes, behaviours, and ways of thinking of modern humanity with a mechanistic-instrumentalistic nature that aligns with Laswellian political reasoning. As a political regime, the term 'democracy' in the modern sense has been used around the 19th century to describe a system of representative government in which representatives are elected through free and competitive elections (Dinata, 2023; Gwijangge et al., 2023). In the view of this regime, democracy should provide a meaningful way in which the majority of citizens can exert significant influence on decisions or policy-making (Dinata, 2023).

In the case of Indonesia, after reform, more than 200 new political parties were born, and the level of popular participation in the 1999 election was very high, namely more than 80%. These political conditions and situations are like repeating the first elections in the 1950s, when Indonesia experienced parliamentary democracy for the first time after independence in 1945 (Ufen, 2009). The high level of participation cannot be separated from the flow of democracy, which inherently offers positive values, such as freedom to assemble, associate, and establish certain political organisations or parties.

Moreover, the pro-democracy voices from the post-1998 reform until the first direct presidential election in 2004 have given good hope and optimism for the political life of Indonesian society in the future. A liberal democratic regime presupposes that each autonomous person strives to gain and maintain power at all costs. From here, we can see how leaders or political actors use all their power and efforts to seize and maintain their political positions. If necessary, the position or power can be held for a lifetime.

One morning, many people from Kalipera Malang attended the Kaliasri village office in Kalipare sub-district, Malang district. They had asked the incumbent village head, Gaguk, to run again in the Kaliasri village election in July 2023. It should be noted that village head Gaguk has repeatedly rejected the possibility of running again in the Pilkades contestation in July 2023. The reason is clear: he has served enough as a village head from 2017-2023. They asked the village head to fulfil their demands in their banners and demonstration tools. In today's political tradition, community demonstrations are often or mostly carried out because of disappointment or disillusionment with leadership.

From the political context that the author has described above, in general, the articulation of power can be said to be "dirty" and "dark," which does not apply to the practice of leadership of a village head in Malang Regency. In 2023, the public was shown the unconventional politics or power articulation practices of an incumbent (village head) who had to be forced by the community to return to the *Pilkades* in July 2023. The village head has long refused to run for re-election in the 2023 election. He felt that one term was enough to lead Kaliasri Village and handed over to other figures. In fact, at that time, the community's satisfaction with his leadership was quite high.

At that time, around 150 residents of Kaliasri Village, Kalipare Subdistrict, Malang Regency, East Java, demonstrated at the Kaliasri Village Office on Thursday (23/2/2023) at 10.00 WIB. They asked

Kaliasri village head Gaguk to continue his leadership. According to the residents, their village head is considered to have a good reputation and has successfully developed the village.



Figure 1: Villagers demonstrating at the Kaliasri Village Office

In the context of leadership, Gaguk has provided fundamental changes in his first period of leadership. One form of this is administrative order within the village government, road improvements, and developing a village tourist attraction called "Bedengan". The Bedengan Tourism was previously an ordinary and dirty river that functioned as an irrigation channel for residents' agriculture. In the era of the Gaguk government since 2017, the river was transformed into a water attraction for residents to bathe and fish. They also considered the village head actively involved in the development process, even working with the community. He not only gave orders but also jumped in directly. Furthermore, the Gaguk village head never collected his salary as village head. Instead, the salary was returned to the village to be managed as village development financing, and at the end of his term, he refused when asked to run again in the July 2023 village head election.

Indeed, every citizen has the same rights in politics and can make permanent household rules for the sake of the country's progress will be achieved (Ketchum, 2004). Considering the empirical facts above, the Laswellian political theory of who gets what, when, and how cannot explain the political phenomenon in Kaliasri village by the village leader, Gaguk. The acts and behaviours in the literature can be categorised as "ethics of power," which differs from the mainstream theorisation of power. As such, this article reveals and elaborates on the political message of incumbent leadership attitudes and behaviours amid liberal-capitalistic politics. In other words, Gaguk's political articulation practices are outside the Lasswellian political order above.

2. Literature Review

So far, several relevant studies have become a knowledge map in this research, including a study by Qori (2013) entitled "Charismatic Leadership versus Transformational Leadership." He concluded that

the charismatic leadership style is more ideological, while transformational leadership emphasises the dimension of individual change. However, these two types of leadership aim to improve the quality of human resources, including developing competencies and skills.

Second, a study by Sy, Horton, and Riggio (2018) entitled "Charismatic Leadership: Eliciting and Channelling Follower Emotions." In this research, they concluded that charismatic leadership is a model that places emotions as the main variable and marker of a leader's charisma. Third, a study by Saerang, Sumual, and Tuerah (2023) entitled "Charismatic Leadership in the Digital Era." They concluded that charismatic leaders in this era can take advantage of opportunities, anticipate changes quickly, and respond effectively. The ability to adapt to future insights is based on digitalisation.

From the literature review above, it can be concluded that charismatic leadership has dimensions in a particular ideology based on individual emotions and the ability to adapt contextually. In other words, the studies above do not reveal the political context that surrounds it so that a leader behaves like a "charismatic" person. On the contrary, this study shifts the charisma issue from personal to political. This is where this study's research position, gap, or novelty lies.

In this study, there are several objectives, including revealing political messages from the incumbent's political articulation practices, understanding what dimensions drive the practice of political articulation to be carried out, and how the public assesses the political behaviour of the incumbent.

3. Research Methods

The author uses qualitative methods and research design with case studies in this research (Agus Sholahuddin, 2021). This study uses two data collection techniques: interviews and documentation. The researcher uses purposive sampling to obtain valid data from key informants. The main informants are the incumbent, Mr. Gaguk, followed by Heru and Sauri, each a community leader, and Darto, an ordinary resident of Kaliasri Village. Using descriptive analysis, such as data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions, the study describes the incumbent's practice of political articulation.

4. Results and Discussion

In 2017, Gaguk participated in the power contest in Kaliasri Village for the first time. The contest had two pairs of candidates, namely Gaguk and Sunardi. At that time, the successful teams tried their best to win their respective candidates. In fact, in the tradition of the villagers, to gain power in public office, the successful teams of each candidate used all efforts, including money, to accumulate votes in the village head election in Kaliasri Village. Other candidates had spent a lot of money to defeat Gaguk in the 2017 village head election. Therefore, from the facts above, it can be concluded that today's political contests require very large logistics. This confirms liberal and capitalist democracy.

Blusukan and Absorbing Aspirations

In broad terms, in leadership, a person can be proficient and skilful in managing power when how many achievements can be implemented and impact on the public. In other words, great leadership is also measured by articulating power, whether the policies are populist or discriminatory (Kobalen & Bakti, 2019). Whether they become idols or enemies depends on how they interpret and translate power. In this article, we depart from the Weberian concept of "charisma" power or recognise the concept of

"ethics of power." In a sense, when power is used fully for the benefit of the public/general, then a leader would obtain a good response from the community.

From this fact or phenomenon of Gaguk, the articulation of power politics shows what the incumbent has done through the *blusukan* strategy. A terminology that is very condensed with the political strategy of populism. The strategy (Alaskan) is found in the main narrator, Gaguk himself, as the Kaliasri village head: "Indeed, if the community judges me to want to lead again. However, my strong reason for refusing to participate in the village head election for a second term is that I have not given maximum attention to the village. Because I have never been in the office. I only go around by bicycle to people's houses because I do not like being in the office. Therefore, it is better if the person who leads the village is someone who likes to work in the office..." Informant, Gaguk, March 20, 2024).

In this context, the strategy is characterised as the politics of populism, which has become a new political trend after the reform period. The practice of political articulation through coming to people's houses, participating in community service, and other activities is closer to creating power with Weberian-style "charisma." The charisma was articulated in what was done by residents who enthusiastically asked incumbent Gaguk to run again in the election. The charisma was visible when the incumbent, Gaguk, refused the residents' request. Although it was with a heavy heart and based on the community's will, he could not resist. With tearful eyes "...I do not want to, but if I do not join, the election organisers in the village threaten to disband themselves, so there is no need for an election. If it is like that, it will damage democracy, which will not work. So, I still joined. During my leadership, I never took a salary, so my salary was allocated for the residents, including "the Bangkok land" that I also gave to the residents. (Informant, Gaguk, March 20, 2024).

While serving as village head, Gaguk never took his salary. Instead, he gave it to the villagers. This differs from other officials who commonly accumulate wealth and take money not due to them. Such ethics of power are exactly what the holders of power in this republic should have. Since he had not taken the salary, the people of Kaliasri considered this to be their leader's praiseworthy attitude and behaviour. Then, they considered the incumbent to be a person with extraordinary behaviour. Moreover, the community considered Gaguk worthy to be the village head for a second term. One of the interviewees and a Neighbourhood Association (RT) head said, "... the residents like Mr. Gaguk because the 12 hectares of *Bengkak* land were given to the residents to use. If a resident died, he would join in the morning and give alms to the family. Mr. Gaguk did not want to receive a salary, so I was the one who distributed Mr. Gaguk's salary to people experiencing poverty, especially the elderly and widows. Mr. Gaguk also provided necessities regularly every month, and I was also the one who distributed them. If there was a village event, Mr. Gaguk also always helped by spending his own money..." (Informant, Haru, March 12, 2024).

From this standpoint, the public perceives that Kades Gaguk is a figure who can be a role model because he became a role model for his leadership during the first period. Therefore, Gaguk's charisma was formed because the practice of articulating power or position during his tenure was considered very good, unique, and anti-mainstream. As a result of Gaguk's outstanding personal reputation, it is only natural that the community asked him to lead for a second term as Kaliasri village head.

Thus, the practice of articulating power in the form of liking to go to the people to absorb aspirations, coupled with Gaguk's unwillingness to take a salary, is a way of doing politics that marks the ethical behaviour of an ideal future leader. Because he can influence through communication practices towards his subordinates as a form of creating an important culture in the organisation (Brown et al., 2020; Hidayat et al., 2024; Putra et al., n.d.; Supratman et al., 2021; Wivel & Grøn, 2021).

A Leader who is Light-Hearted

As a Leader, Gaguk's village head is known for being sociable, social, and directly helpful in various village events. Dahlian's reasoning presupposes how people can influence others to follow what the official wants. This signifies that a leader can strengthen the bond between leader and followers (Parry et al., 2019) because of their extraordinary (Dwinugraha, 2019). So, he can invite other people to implement village government policies well.

One of the interviewees "...during Mr. Gaguk's leadership, there have been many changes in Kaliasri Village. Leadership that is carried out sincerely and generously (loyalty); for example, 100% of village funds for the people, paying close attention to the poor and widows in Kaliasri Village..." (Informant, Sauri March 12, 2024). Hence, the incumbent village head Gaguk's leadership in the initial or first period was quite impressive to the residents of Kaliasri village, Kalipare sub-district, Malang district. As a leader, Gaguk's figure is considered to have individual qualities that can be extraordinary, which marks that Gaguk is a charismatic figure. Charisma is characterised by the enthusiasm of Kaliasri villagers to come and demonstrate at the village office to ask Gaguk to run again in the political contestation, namely the village election. They did not pay. Instead, they came voluntarily, leaving their daily work as farmers and others. Residents felt the need to participate in requesting that village head Gaguk be honoured to run.

The Weberian theory of "charismatic" power was evident when the villagers joyfully asked Gaguk to become the village leader for a second term. Indeed, the concept of charisma makes people very loved, respected, and honoured by many people without any coercion. Charismatic leaders are good at inspiring followers and making them more innovative without coercion. Charismatic leaders are good at inspiring followers, more innovative (Johan et al., 2021; Le Blanc et al., 2021) And reflect a healthy organisational culture (Ozgenel, 2020).

This form of love is based on the concept of leadership valued by the public, referred to in other theories as "populism," i.e., people known by the public as positive. This is what Gaguk does by often participating in the routine activities of Kaliasri villagers. Moreover, in the previous description, it was mentioned that he uses his salary as the village head for the interests of the residents, especially those economically disadvantaged. This is where Gaguk's personal quality is marked through his self-dedication to the welfare of the people, not his personal and family interests. This is indeed difficult and unique in the historical field of modern leadership, which tends to be capitalistic and liberalistic.

Yes, in another theory of justice or social justice by John Rawls, it was explained that justice must provide equal opportunities to all people, especially those who are socially, economically, and politically disadvantaged. In a way, what incumbent Gaguk did by giving monthly salaries to poor citizens is coherent with Rawls' theory of justice above, which considers those citizens who are socially classed at the level of the poor and disadvantaged economically.

The People's Leader

As the researcher has detailed above, the entire salary of incumbent village head Gaguk during his first term was returned to the economically disadvantaged residents. This conforms to democratic governance, which is leadership from the people, by the people, and used entirely for the people. One of the interviewees confirmed this: "...in science, the government will not progress if an opposition party does not accompany it, and I used to be an opponent if it did not fit my principles." (Informant, Haru, March 20, 2024). This was confirmed by Darto." Since Mr. Gaguk took charge, this village has become a tourist destination." (Informant, Darto, March 15, 2024).

Based on this statement, from the beginning, the narrator was a figure with strong principles regarding Gaguk's ability to lead Kaliasri village. From the beginning, the narcissist had strong principles regarding Gaguk's ability to lead Kaliasri village. He assumed that Gaguk would not be able to do much with his position. However, after seeing Gaguk's leadership for one period, this narcissist experienced a change in assumptions, which they initially doubted and then became a supporter of Gaguk.

Thus, the public judged that Gaguk's qualities were very good and trustworthy. The concept of charismatic leadership is translated into other signs, such as the changed attitudes of the figures and actors who opposed Gaguk in the first election around 2017, who began to be sympathetic and tended to admire Gaguk's leadership so far—leaders with charismatic characteristics and affective commitment positively impact change, including inspiring attitudes toward organizational achievement. (Machokoto, 2019; Mangundjaya & AMIR, 2021).

The sympathetic attitude mentioned above is clearer when residents' political preference is to force Gaguk to run again in the political contestation of Kaliasri village in 2023. Politics is a matter of art, and art requires individual talent to articulate it on the practical political stage. While the stage of practical politics is often dirtier than idealism, incumbent Gaguk can show the public that power politics is not always coherent with pragmatic politics, as Laswellian reasoning. Consequently, charismatic leaders are constructed naturally through political articulations of power that the author can say are "beyond Laswellian" politics. This means that the political articulation of power is not for profit, especially material. Instead, power is interpreted as a civic, social responsibility to facilitate the community's happiness and welfare.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that what Gaguk did during his leadership was to create charismatic leadership through articulations that could be said to be outside the mainstream logic of officials so far. Therefore, this study reveals the charismatic side of a village leader who is highly respected, appreciated, and fought for by the village community because of his ability to provide the best service for all villagers, especially people experiencing poverty and widows. From this study, Gaguk's figure is considered a charismatic leader. The main markers of charisma include Gaguk being considered to be very accommodating of the aspirations of the residents, being very generous in helping every resident who needs help, and finally, Gaguk is considered by the residents as a leader born from the people, not from the nobility. Because he was born to a farmer's child who struggled to be successful in the future, *however*, this study has limitations related to the religious aspect, and our suggestion as a continuation is that it is necessary to research to see the relationship between a person's charisma and the religious aspect.

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