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Role of the *Botoh* as Political Brokers and Gamblers during the Tulungagung Local Election of 2018

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ABSTRAK

Studi mengenai *botoh* umumnya fokus pada praktik perjudian di pilkades dan transformasi perannya dari pilkades ke pilkada. Namun, artikel ini menjelaskan mengenai peran *botoh* sebagai *broker* politik dan penjudi pada pilkada Kabupaten Tulungagung 2018. Temuan data menunjukkan bahwa aktivitas yang dilakukan *botoh* dalam memengaruhi pilihan pemilih memberikan dampak pada hasil pilkada yakni memenangkan kandidat yang tidak diunggulkan. Untuk memperoleh data secara mendalam, penelitian dilakukan dengan wawancara terhadap para *botoh* besar, melakukan observasi terhadap pola kerja jaringan *botoh* di lapangan, serta mengumpulkan dokumen dari pihak-pihak yang terkait. Pelaksanaan pilkada memperlihatkan praktik perjudian terbentuk menjadi tiga macam, yaitu sistem *ngapit*, *leg-leg'an*, dan *biting*. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa peran *botoh* sebagai *broker* politik dan penjudi disebabkan oleh ajang pilkada yang memiliki uang taruhan dengan jumlah yang besar, imbalan dari kandidat sebagai bagian dari tim sukses dan sistem *pilkada* langsung membuat kandidat memercayakan *botoh* untuk mengisi tim pemenangannya karena dianggap memiliki pemahaman tentang karakteristik pemilih.

Kata kunci: *botoh*, *broker* politik, perjudian

ABSTRACT

Current studies on the *botoh* generally focus on gambling in village-head elections (*pilkades*) and how its role transforms from *pilkades* to local elections (*pilkada*). However, this article defines the *botoh* as a political broker and gambler during the 2018 local election of Tulungagung Regency. This research found that the *botoh's* way of persuading voters had a positive effect on an unfavorable candidate and helped him win. This study conducted in-depth interviews of "big" *botoh*, observed field operation patterns, and collected documents from related parties. The practice of gambling during *pilkada* is categorized into three types: *ngapit*, *leg-leg'an*, and *biting*. This article argues that the roles of the *botoh* as a political broker and gambler are caused by high-stakes gambling, compensation from candidates to be part of the campaign team, and the direct election process. In this context, candidates are likely to entrust the *botoh* with an important role within their campaign teams, because they are considered to understand the characteristics of voters.

Keywords: *botoh*, political broker, gambling

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INTRODUCTION

This article explains the role of the *botoh* (gamblers) as political brokers and gamblers during local government elections (*pilkada*). Their activities are related to the high-stakes gambling that occurs during an election. The broker may receive benefits from the winning candidate or can be invited to be part of the winning candidate's team. Many studies on political brokers have explained that these brokers distribute the necessary goods to the voters and even resort to gambling to gain benefits from the winning candidate (Auyero 2001; Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004; Nichter 2008; Baldwin 2013; Zarazaga 2014; Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015). The winning candidate will then show appreciation for the work done by these brokers by giving them a position in a political party, providing financial benefits, or offering them the opportunity to work on government projects (Darwin 2017; Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). Brokers may come from the groups of bureaucrats, local figures, or businessmen (Agustino 2014; Tawakkal et al. 2017; Aspinall and Mas'udi 2017). However, in the case of the Tulungagung local election of 2018, the *botoh* only worked to help the candidate whose name was already in the betting exchange.

This kind of political betting originally happened in the head of the village election (*pilkades*), particularly in East Java and Central Java. The difference between those two provinces lies on their diverse gambling mechanisms. In Central Java, the *botoh* does the gambling based on the agreement made between the candidate and the *botoh*. Meanwhile, in East Java, the gambling is done only among the gamblers, who do not have any relation with the political candidates. Some studies have shown that in, village level elections, the *botoh* play by betting on one of the candidate's names. After holding one name, they will strategically work to help that candidate win in order to win the game (Fajariyah 2014; Widyarini 2017; Akbar 2019). This gambling practice has been growing rapidly in local elections wherein the *botoh* are highly involved in betting on the candidates. Such phenomenon has emerged, because local elections provide opportunities for them to make the candidates the objects of their regular betting events.

There are several supporting conditions explaining how the *botoh*'s involvement shifted from *pilkades* to *pilkada*. First, in East Java, gambling in the *pilkades* is a common thing. The *botoh* take advantage of the elections and make predictions as to who is going to win. The decision to determine who wins the election is generally based on the amount of funding a candidate can provide for the people. It has become a common belief among the local citizens that political leaders are supposed to have high amounts of capital. Therefore, the *botoh* have come to capitalize on such a situation. Second, the local election gives great financial benefits to these gamblers. Third, the current election system has heightened the dependence of electoral candidates on these political brokers (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). This dependence is especially heightened by the fact that the candidates believe that a *botoh* is an ideal broker who understands the voters. Fourth, the gambling network owned by the *botoh* benefits the candidates and helps demonstrate that the latter have considerable support. Needless to say, the brokers also benefit from this interchange. For example, the political candidates typically give gifts to brokers, either in the form of financial support, services, or business opportunities (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019, 138). Furthermore, brokers are also offered certain government positions after helping candidates win the elections (Tawakkal et al. 2017).

The *botoh*'s involvement in the local election is based on the high demand during this particular time. On the one hand, as explained by Fitriyah (2018) and Hartati, Nafisa, and Hidayanti. (2019), the *botoh*'s activities are mostly based on economic motives as their common motivation is to enrich themselves. On the other hand, the candidates decide to use the *botoh*'s services due to the perception that a transactional election requires them to have a team, which can distribute the aid directly and effectively. As the aim of such a system is to help the candidate obtain as many votes as possible, recruiting the right people who understand the voters at the grassroots level has a significant role in influencing people's choice, and therefore, in dictating the outcome of the elections. However, current studies have not yet discussed how the *botoh* engage in the political arena. Therefore, this article will use

the case in Tulungagung Regency to illustrate the role of gamblers in the local elections.

The 2018 Tulungagung Regency election was held on June 27. It was mainly a competition between the incumbent candidate and his running mate, Syahri Mulyo and Maryoto Birowo, respectively, against their counterparts, Margiono and Eko Prisdianto. Mulyo and Birowo was proposed by the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDI-P) and Nasdem. On the other side, Margiono was the chief of the PWI (Indonesian Journalists Association), and Eko Prisdianto was a famous puppeteer in Tulungagung. This tandem was proposed through the support of Gerindra, PKB, Hanura, PAN, Demokrat, PPP, and PKS. The result of recapitulation made by the KPUD (Tulungagung General Elections Commission) has pronounced Mulyo-Birowo duo as the official candidates. Even though the candidates' condition was not favorable, Mulyo was caught by the KPK 21 days before the election due to a corruption case in which he received bribes amounting to 2.5 trillion rupiah in relation to an ongoing road construction project.

The success of the Syahri Mulyo-Maryoto Birowo tandem greatly relied on the significant role of the *botoh* as political brokers. This article aims to explain the gambling practices applied by the *botoh* during the Tulungagung local election of 2018 and their impact on the incumbent candidate's victory. Several studies in the field of political science have discussed many success stories of candidates winning the elections because of the involvement of brokers who engage in vote-buying or giving of goods to the voters (Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter 2013; Larreguy, Marshall, and Querubín 2016). Understanding the roles of political brokers can be useful in explaining the role of the *botoh* during elections, especially in identifying the extent of the latter's engagement in the election process. Furthermore, understanding gambling practices in the context of elections will add something new to the literature on political brokers.

The current article argues that the *botoh* choose to become political brokers and gamblers in a local election due to the higher amount of money and the greater benefits they stand to gain compared with

what they will get from ordinary gambling. By becoming part of the campaign team, they can also receive other rewards if their chosen candidate wins the election. To understand the role of the *botoh* in a local election, this article will be divided into two parts. The first part discusses the role of a *botoh* as a political broker. The second part maps out who a *botoh* is and explains how this individual undertakes gambling activities during the election.

THE ROLE OF A POLITICAL BROKER

The changes in the mechanism of local elections into a direct election in 2005 have resulted in the establishment of new patterns in how candidates win the elections. In efforts to gather as many voters as they can, candidates typically form a campaign team that will help them win the election (*tim sukses*). The team's structure and hierarchy is based on its members' understanding of the voters' characteristics in one particular region. This team consists of members of the candidates' political party, religious leaders, businessmen, members of mass organizations, and others (Tawakkal et al. 2017). According to political experts, the campaign team's work in forming a structure and mapping the region is called "political brokerage" (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019).

The use of a political brokers is based on two major factors (Carty 1981; Baldwin 2013; Stokes et al. 2013). First, the political parties all agree that they should employ people who understand the voters. These parties rely on brokers to form a reliable network through which they can distribute goods that are projected to attract a larger number of voters. Second, political brokerage is fundamentally seen by the brokers as a pragmatic opportunity to obtain material benefits. In Indonesia, political brokers mostly work through informal networks instead of a political party (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019, 45).

The role of a political broker has also been explained by Rodrigo Zarazaga (2014), who stated that these brokers do not only work by buying voters through the distribution of goods and services. He categorized broker strategies into three types: the broker as a propaganda activist, who works to promote the candidate; the broker as the one

who mobilizes the masses and invites a large number of citizens or voters to an open campaign; and the broker who engages in vote-buying and coordinates with the candidates as to how much is needed for this activity (Zarazaga 2014).

The emergence of this broker role theory is a response toward the understanding that a broker's main role is to buy votes and mobilize the masses, thus gathering as many votes as possible for a candidate. According to the scholars, the ability of a broker to ensure voters' commitment to choose their supported candidate can be explained by two arguments. First, Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes (2004) and Chandra (2007) explained that voters obey all the agreements they made with a broker, because the latter can monitor their choice; hence, they stand to lose the proposed benefits if they do not vote for the broker's candidate. Second, according to Lawson and Greene (2011) and Finan and Schechter (2012), voters are bound to the broker due to the fact that they respect the agreement made between them and the resources offered to them fit their needs.

In this article, we found that the 2018 Tulungagung elections clearly showed the emergence of a new understanding of the role of the *botoh* as political brokers who perform gambling within the realm of political activities. Thus, this work provides a new theoretical framework in understanding how a political broker works to win the candidate not only by distributing the goods to the voters, but also by practicing gambling.

The *botoh* have traditionally gambled on who will win the village-head election. However, it seems that this kind of activity has already expanded to the provincial-level election. In fact, the amount of money to be gained is even greater if the *botoh* succeeds in helping his candidate win the election. Specifically, in the case of Tulungagung, the practice of gambling was backed by the betting syndicate run by the *botoh* during the election. Such a syndicate played a significant role in helping its chosen candidate win the election.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was done at Tulungagung in 2018. There were two pairs of candidates who ran for the positions of Tulungagung regent and vice regent, namely, Syahri Mulyo-Maryoto Birowo and Margiono-Eko Prisdianto, respectively. The 2018 Tulungagung election was chosen as the object of this research based on several considerations. First, the practice of gambling in the village-head elections is common in this area and has been culturally ingrained into their society. The *botoh* are well-known among the local people, with some of them even holding positions in the regional parliament in Tulungagung. These *botoh* were largely elected because of their widespread and systematic gambling practices. Second, the incumbent candidate, Syahri Mulyo, happened to be the son of a prominent *botoh*, namely, Dasar. Third, as they were incumbent officials, two political parties supported Mulyo's tandem, even though the circumstances surrounding them were not favorable. In fact, they were accused of corruption by the KPK 21 days before the election, thereby preventing them from attending any campaign.

In collecting the data for this article, I interviewed three senior *botoh* who were widely known as "players" involved in the village-head elections. The three *botoh* included Dasar (the father of Mulyo), Suharminto or "Bedot," and Supriyono, both members of the House of Representatives from PDI-P. These three *botoh* were chosen, because of their huge public and financial influence in determining the gambling process and the winning candidate. They were also chosen based on the information received from the leaders of supporting parties, the election commission, and the election supervisor.

For this research, I arranged meetings with the elite *botoh* and their bottom line (also known as *jokers* in the village level). I also conducted several interviews with some important people of the local communities, such as members of youth organizations, bureaucrats, and local figures. Based on my understanding, gambling during elections happened not only among the *botoh* but also among a larger number of locals. Their involvement in such an activity was influenced by the culture of risking something to obtain better things.

In this study, I asked the informants several questions about certain topics related to who the key actors were, how the network was made, the strategies applied to win while gambling, and the benefits that can be obtained. From this process, I intend to prove that the roles of the *botoh* as a political broker and gambler have roughly influenced the result of the Tulungagung 2018 local election. Specifically, the influence came from the formation of the *botoh* networking system and the promising benefits they stand to gain after helping a candidate win the election.

THE ROLE OF THE *BOTOH* AS A POLITICAL BROKER

“*Botoh*” is the term used to define the people who practice gambling in village-head elections in Central Java and the Western part of East Java (Mataraman). In order to win the bet prize, they devise strategies to help the candidate they are betting on win the election. This gambling practice eventually became more widespread and popular after the local executive and legislative elections were conducted directly. The increasing popularity of this practice relies on the amounts at stake, either in the village level or the district level. The *botoh* can also gain a higher status or recognition from the society, financial benefits from the political campaign, business opportunities, and positions in the local government. The rewards mainly depend on the agreement made between a *botoh* and his chosen candidate.

The *botoh*'s involvement in the elections came from the demands of candidates, who acknowledged their experience and capability in gathering votes (Interview with Dasar, March 20, 2019). Even though a *botoh* may not be part of the candidates' political party, the latter's decision to employ a *botoh* to join their campaign team is also influenced by their distrust on their fellow party members. Furthermore, a *botoh* is neither a member of mass organization nor a public official. Rather, the *botoh* may come from various backgrounds, including farmers, businessmen, and other professions. Despite the differences, they all work toward the same goal of reaping various benefits from local elections, starting from the village, to the district and up to the provincial levels.

As political brokers, the *botoh* utilize their informal networks to gather information and calculate a candidate's chances of winning based on geographical mapping. Through mapping, the *botoh* will identify the voters from the grassroots and provide suggestions on the best campaign strategies to use to help the candidate gain sympathy from the voters. Moreover, the *botoh* can accurately estimate the number of voters who will choose the candidate and find ways to attract even more supporters.

According to the theory on the role of brokers proposed by Zarazaga (2014), the *botoh* can also serve as a propaganda activist. Based on my interview with Supriyono, a *botoh* who also served as the speaker of the Tulungagung local parliament (DPRD) between 2014 and 2019, the *botoh* can easily create a negative propaganda campaign. The spread of propaganda can be done by continuously propagating a rival candidate's bad image to the voters through various means. They relentlessly carry out such a smear campaign by relying on their networks from the district level to the lowest administration division in Indonesia (*Rukun Tetangga/RT*) (Interview with Supriyono, February 7, 2019).

An example of such propaganda can be demonstrated by the information disseminated after the capture of Mulyo. Ironically, they attracted sympathy from the people by saying that Mulyo was a victim of a political scheme between Margiono and other political actors in Jakarta. According to some *botoh*, this narrative, also known as *banteng ketaton* (injured bull), means that someone should fight and defend himself with perseverance (Interview with Rendra Kurniawan, March 20, 2019; Interview with Satria Wicaksono, March 23, 2019). Moreover, the *botoh* also spread the news that Margiono, as someone who had much experience in national politics, will only manipulate (*minteri*) the people of Tulungagung. The *botoh* wanted the people to believe that Mulyo must win the election, because he had been betrayed or defamed by his opponents. The *botoh* kept spreading this made-up story for three weeks before the voting day.

Second, as a political broker, the *botoh* have the ability to mobilize the masses with their experience and networking. Supriyono, one of the influential *botoh* in Tulungagung, explained that using only cad-

res from the party was not enough if they wanted to gather electoral power for the candidate (Interview with Supriyono, February 7, 2019). Therefore, it was necessary to involve senior *botoh*, who have a reputable image among the people. These top *botoh* also worked with and gained benefits from Syahri Mulyo in his previous election bid.

In mobilizing the masses, the *botoh* can be considered as traditional political consultants. The candidate trusts the *botoh*'s expertise and reliability. One of the most reliable abilities possessed by the *botoh* is their ability to accurately map the voters' support and to understand exactly what the voters need. Thus, they can use these insights to gather more support from the voters. Similarly, Supriyono explained that having the ability to manage a political party or organization is not enough; rather, it is very crucial to employ the *botoh* due to their ability to gather masses during an election period (Interview with Supriyono, February 7, 2019).

The mobilization carried out by the *botoh* is typically based on the pyramid structure. The senior *botoh* have networks at the district level, then the *botoh* from the district level will work in the village level, and so on down to the sub-village level. In the lowest level, each *botoh* is expected to mobilize around 10 people by giving them money and gifts or by offering some forms of pleasure, such as organizing leisurely trips or karaoke parties. Each *botoh* must get at least seven people who want to be part of the candidate's campaign team. The targets are usually family members or groups with informal networks, such as local clusters (*kejawen*), traditional artists, and other communities. The logic behind determining which groups to invite is based on the assumption that these potential recruits usually have a strong bond among themselves (Interview with Rendra Kurniawan, March 20, 2019).

Third, as a political broker, the *botoh* are also involved in vote-buying. However, this method is applicable only after a clear structure in the sub-village level is formed. For the 2018 elections, there were data collection activities to see who supported the Mulyo-Birowo tandem, who did not support them, or who were the undecided ones. After gathering the information and understanding the voters' characteristics, the *botoh* would then mark off the voters using different colors to determine

the amount of money to be distributed (Interview with Dasar, March 20, 2019). They used *petak* (the white mark) for Mulyo supporters, *cemeng* (the black mark) for Margiono supporters, and *klawu* for those who were undecided.

According to Suharminto, the data regarding voters' preferences are available until the smallest unit, which is determined by the family register (Interview with Suharminto, February 7, 2019). Such data dictated the differences in the amount of money to be given to the Mulyo supporters, the Margiono supporters, and those who were still undecided. Those marked as *petak* received around 25,000–35,000 rupiah and a message that Mulyo was just a victim of political propaganda (Interview with Ahmad Djadi, March 21, 2019; Interview with Supriyono, February 7, 2019). Those marked as *cemeng* received 10,000–15,000 rupiah, and those marked as *klawu* received higher amounts within the range of 45,000–60,000 rupiah. These amounts are based on the geographical location of the voters, that is, the closer they are to the capital of Tulungagung, the more money they received. However, the methods used by the *botoh* in vote-buying were not limited to giving money. They also used other methods to achieve their goal.

The first method is to buy voters invitation cards so that they do not have to go to the polling station during the actual election day. This method was used for the supporters of Margiono-Prisdianto. The second method is to give voters electronic devices, such as gadgets, television, or others, or inviting them for a trip and recreational activities on the day of the election (Interview with Satria Wicaksono, March 23, 2019). This method applies to the undecided voters or new voters who often think that their votes have no impact to their future life. Therefore, they prefer to simply gain the benefits that can be felt quickly and directly.

THE ROLE OF THE *BOTOH* AS A GAMBLER DURING LOCAL ELECTIONS

As I stated earlier, the *botoh* are people who often do gambling on a daily basis. They gamble by betting over a candidate and helping them win the election. The amount of money at stake can vary, start-

ing from hundreds of thousands to tens of millions of rupiah. In the context of local politics in East Java, the *botoh* are a major part of the village-head election around Mataraman (Kediri, Tulungagung, Trenggalek, Nganjuk, Ngawi, Madiun, Ponorogo, and Pacitan). Their influence also extends beyond the village level, that is, the *botoh* who own large amounts of capital also become involved in the regent and local legislative elections. They gradually became part of the election system, which emphasized a candidate's electability as in the village level. Therefore, the practice of political gambling has been observed during the Tulungagung 2018 local election.

In the Tulungagung 2018 local elections, the *botoh* not only played the part of political brokers, they also played the role of gamblers who aimed to profit from the results of the election (Interview with Dasar, March 20, 2019; Interview with Suharminto, February 7, 2019). Aside from receiving money from the candidate during the campaign process, they also have other motives. Indeed, their main motive was to accurately predict and side with the winning candidate by considering and calculating the advantages and disadvantages. There were instances of some *botoh* who helped candidates, but this did not rule out the possibility that they were also gambling on the side. Whoever engaged in the competition would be included in the game. Thus, the *botoh* did not only gamble and hope for the best, they also worked strategically to win the election so that they would not lose on their bets (Interview with Dasar, March 20, 2019).

In general, there are two ways through which gambling mechanisms are carried out by the *botoh* at the village-head election: (1) *leg-leg'an*, which refers to gambling by guessing who will win and lose in the election, and (2) *biting*, which refers to betting by guessing the results of the votes obtained by particular candidate (Interview with Satria Wicaksono, March 23, 2019). To win the gambling, the *botoh* will do their best to make their chosen candidate win. One commonly used strategy is to steal voters by using money or gifts to dissuade them from voting for a candidate who is perceived to have the potential to garner a larger number of voters or reach 50% of the total voters.

The *botoh* have a huge influence in Tulungagung, because they had no specific political affiliation. Hence, they can be considered as opportunists in this occasion. Often they do not even consider the candidate's background, as they focus only on helping a candidate win the election. Furthermore, if they win the gamble, they will not only receive the financial reward but also other goods or a government position from the elected candidate (Interview with Satria Wicaksono, March 23, 2019). When doing gambling, the *botoh* will also involve the locals or new voters.

The data obtained from the interviews with three senior *botoh* in Tulungagung (Dasar, Suharminto, and Supriyono) revealed similar views. They all argued that in all elections—regardless of the level—there will always be the influence of money. According to the *botoh* I interviewed, a candidate's vision/mission or projected programs cannot guarantee that he/she would win the election. Rather, all three *botoh* believed that the candidate who has the better strategy has greater chances of winning even with no clear vision or mission.

The gambling practice done in village-head elections has resulted in some *botoh* being widely known among the local people, especially if they have proven their ability to help a candidate win. Those infamous *botoh* also bet in local government and legislative elections, while others join a political party or even become members of the legislative body. The names of well-known *botoh* are Dasar, Suharminto, and Supriyono. In this article, the mapping of those *botoh* will describe how the gambling practice was undertaken during the 2018 Tulungagung election.

The first *botoh*, Dasar, is a senior *botoh* who is well-known among the Tulungagung people. He has a successful business in selling fruits, and in his spare time, he gambles in many local elections. Due to his gambling skills, he has won at the village level many times. In other words, many village chiefs in Tulungagung were the candidates he placed his bet on in the last elections. Dasar is also the father of Mulyo. Thus, his candidacy in the 2013 Tulungagung election cannot be separated from his father's role as a senior *botoh* (Interview with Dasar, March 20, 2019). In fact, it was Dasar's wide network that helped Mulyo

win in 2013. One of the groups that played a big role in achieving his victory is the traditional and small coffee shop community.

Dasar's network consisted of other *botoh* to whom he lent money for gambling (Interview with Rendra Kurniawan, March 20, 2019). This *botoh* network was formed geographically, which meant that Dasar had people in almost every district in Tulungagung. This was the reason why Mulyo obtained his position after his first election campaign, despite not having the support of his party, the PDI-P, which was also the majority party. His victory in the election was mostly due to the power of the *botoh*, which his father mobilized (Hergianasari 2013). The support from the *botoh* was due to the fact that they were returning the favor given to them by Dasar when they needed money to gamble (Interview with Ponidi, March 26, 2019).

Dasar stated that he was again involved as a *botoh* in the 2018 Tulungagung election. However, his involvement was merely to increase the number of voters for the Syahri Mulyo-Maryoto Birowo tandem. Dasar placed a large bet on his own son's opponents in order to attract more people to place a bet, support, and vote for Mulyo so that they can win against Dasar (Interview with Dasar, March 20, 2019). This tactic, called *ngapit* or *apit*, is believed to be quite effective in inviting other *botoh* to participate and place bets on Mulyo in the betting game.

According to Dasar's explanation, the *ngapit* system is a scheme of placing a bet on a candidate with a promised reward of getting double the amount of their initial bet. In the political battle between Mulyo and Margiono, Dasar placed a bet on Margiono with the condition that if Margiono won the election, he will get double the amount of money he has invested as his bet. However, should Mulyo win the election, Dasar will pay all those involved in the game the promised amount of money agreed upon at the beginning. Dasar also gambled with the *botoh* outside of Tulungagung, only this time, he placed a higher bet for Mulyo than what he laid for Margiono in Tulungagung. He would have been able to replace the money he lost if Margiono had won the election.

That kind of gambling method is typical of Dasar, according to Dio Jordy Alvian, a son of Mulyo, and Rendra Kurniawan, a *botoh* coordinator from Ngantru District. Dasar preferred this gambling tactic with the consideration that the particular candidate is unfavorable in terms of his circumstances and his inability to bribe his supporters. Therefore, Dasar will bet for the favorable candidate and easily obtain his earnings if he won. On the contrary, if he lost the gamble, then he would give the money to the other *botoh* who will place a bet for the other candidate. After losing, Dasar will later ask for the money, sometimes as much as double the amount he spent on the candidate he had helped win.

Second, there is a network of *botoh* who work under the control of Supriyono and Suharminto, who are siblings under the PDI-P. Supriyono served as the head of the regional assembly of Tulungagung from 2014–2019, while Suharminto is a member of the same parliament in the same period. The *botoh* under their supervision move in a different pattern from those under Dasar's control. As Suharminto stated, usually, it is the candidate who will come looking for him and bring him particular amounts of money depending on the level of election being held (Interview with Suharminto, February 7, 2019). Later, the *botoh* under his lead will receive the reward if they all succeed to help the candidate win.

During the 2018 Tulungagung elections, the *botoh* who worked under Supriyono and Suharminto also bet to help Mulyo win. This support was given due to the benefit they received as their reward for supporting Supriyono and Suharminto. Additionally, as both were members of the local parliament, this allowed their *botoh* to obtain many benefits, such as government projects, business capital, financial means for their daily needs, jobs, or even loans (Interview with Supriyono, February 7, 2019).

The gambling practices applied by these senior *botoh* used the same method in deciding the candidate they will bet on. First, they will observe by engaging with the locals in public places, such as coffee shops, patrolling posts (*pos ronda*), market stalls, and the village halls. Often,

the village chief can also be an informant for the *botoh*, especially if the latter helped him win in his own election campaign.

The gambling method practiced by Supriyono and Suharminto is called *ngebomb*. As they were unwilling to pay the winner double amount of money just like Dasar with his *ngapit* system, they would thus spend 50% of their agreed bet when doing the “bomb.” The bomb here means that they will give money massively and continuously to voters, with the aim of reducing the opponents’ voters as much as possible. Further, he explained that if they agreed on the bet for 100 million rupiah, Supriyono will utilize 50 million to bombard the voters (Interview with Supriyono, February 7, 2019). This means that when their candidate wins, they will only get 50 million because the other 50 million has already been used to fund the bombing. This strategy is based on the principle that it is better to only win 50% than to lose 100%. They also rationalized that this strategy was done solely to make the opponent lose the “battle,” so to speak.

The difference in tactics between Supriyono-Suharminto and Dasar can be seen in the case of Tanjungsari Village. According to Adib Makarim, the deputy head of the Margiono campaign team, the *jokers* of the village invited the people to bet with relatively small amounts (50,000 rupiah) by arguing that *mbotoh* (the activity of gambling) was their way of life (Interview with Adib Makarim, March 23, 2019). In order to encourage the people to vote for Mulyo, the *jokers* explained that if Mulyo won, they would get double the amount of money and receive 100,000 rupiah. At a larger level, the stakes can reach to 1 million rupiah, which would earn the gambler 2 million if Mulyo won (Interview with Adib Makarim, March 23, 2019). This kind of offer certainly heightened the people’s interest. Moreover, they were driven to work hard on the campaign so that Mulyo will win and they can get double the amount of their initial bet.

To be able to conduct gambling, most of the *botoh*, especially the *jokers* are funded by the Mulyo campaign team (Interview with Dio Jordy Alvian and Rendra Kurniawan, March 20, 2019). These *jokers* are *botoh* who gamble at a geographical level in each region. They will

coordinate with the other *botoh* in the village, hamlet, community, and neighborhood levels. As revealed by field study data, the *botoh* received the fund from Dasar's or Suharminto's colleagues, who also have interests in helping Mulyo win to gain concessions or projects around Tulungagung. The amount of money in circulation became even bigger after Mulyo's involvement in the corruption case, because everyone was eyeing the vice regent seat. They were willing to pay more for the *botoh* to get more projects.

Several factors led to the emergence of gambling practices in the Tulungagung election of 2018. First, it was almost impossible to separate the existence of this gambling practice from the direct election system. This system provides opportunities for the *botoh* to be involved in determining the results of the election. They bet on one of the candidates with a large amount of money and so they were bound to work hard to help the candidate win. Aside from gaining the financial benefit from gambling, they also expected rewards in the form of business capital or important positions from the elected candidates. This system was also supported by the need of the candidates to use the *botoh*'s services to help them win the election.

Second, the *botoh*'s experiences in many village-head elections resulted in the candidates being dependent on their services, rather than just relying on political party. In this case, Mulyo entrusted his campaign team to be handled by Dasar due to his wide network throughout Tulungagung. In addition, the presence of the *botoh* was also considered helpful, because they understood the characteristics of voters better than the political party cadres, as demonstrated by the success of Supriyono and Suharminto. In fact, the *botoh*'s work in conducting surveys is considered more accurate in observing the strengths, character, and charisma of a candidate as perceived by the voters. The *botoh* can also accurately estimate the number of voters a particular candidate can attract in every region.

Third, the practice of gambling in Tulungagung has indeed been carried out for a long time. Some even say that this practice was already prevalent during the first village-head election in the village. There

are perceptions in the community that every election always requires money and that gambling is a common thing in society. The *botoh* do not only include big names. In fact, ordinary people who gamble are also referred to as *botoh*, and their involvement cannot be separated from the motivation from each bet being made. In such a culture, even gambling involving small amounts of money can be doubled or tripled. Hence, the greater the capital, the greater the potential earnings.

CONCLUSION

The *botoh* played two roles in the 2018 Tulungagung local elections: those of a political broker and a gambler. First, as a political broker, the *botoh* act as a propaganda activist, mass mobilizer, and vote-buying coordinator. The *botoh*'s role as a political broker is done solely to distribute the items needed by voters. Due to the experience of being involved in village-level elections, the main strength of the *botoh* is their ability to understand the characteristics of voters and estimate the amount of support a candidate has at the moment. With such insights, they can help formulate the appropriate strategy for the candidate, regardless of how bad the candidate's current situation is. Second, as a gambler, they form a gambling network through which they carry out their gambling activities. Some senior *botoh* within Dasar's gambling network who played an important role in ensuring the re-election of the Mulyo-Birowo tandem during the 2018 Tulungagung local elections.

In carrying out their role as a political broker, the *botoh* may perform several things. As a propaganda activist, a *botoh* always promotes and encourages the people to vote for Mulyo by saying that he was a political victim. Then, they would continue provoking voters who supported the other candidates. To mobilize the masses, the *botoh* formed networks from the neighborhood to the district levels in order to determine the exact number of voters for Mulyo (a process known as *biting*). Then from these calculations, the voters will be mobilized in campaign activities or candidate debates. The last role of the *botoh* is to buy votes. The *botoh* would buy votes using all sorts of tactics, such as buying the ballots from voters who will elect other candidates, giving money before

the voting day, and distracting voters by giving them electronic devices or taking them to trips or vacations.

Research on the *botoh*'s activities during the Tulungagung local elections in 2018 has shown that people outside political parties are always involved in local elections, often as part of the campaign team. The *botoh* who acts as a political broker is typically not a cadre of a political party and has no ideological attachment to candidates, unlike the brokers in South America and Europe who are personally affiliated with the candidates. However, in the context of the Tulungagung local election, the *botoh* did not only carry out the broker's common role of distributing goods and services from the candidates to voters, they also gambled to ensure the victory of the candidates they supported.

The *botoh* took gambling as a winning strategy to support candidates who were not the frontrunners. Such a phenomenon is a unique aspect of local politics in Indonesia wherein political brokers practice gambling as a major strategy by promising to pay the "players" twice as much if their candidates win the election. Although the *botoh* would receive reduced profits, the most important thing is that the candidate they support would win the elections.

The *botoh*'s involvement as a political broker is also due to the mistrust of candidates toward their own party cadres. This concern arises, because the party cadres do not have a deep understanding of voters' characteristics and may only exploit the funds allocated. As a candidate for regent of Tulungagung, Mulyo used the *botoh* as his political brokers, because of his successful first campaign run by his father (a senior *botoh*), which maximized his *botoh* network across Tulungagung. Furthermore, the Chairman of PDI-P Tulungagung, Supriyono, who endorsed Mulyo, also recommended using the *botoh* network, because he and his younger brother, Suharminto, also became Tulungagung DPRD members with the help of the *botoh*.

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