








THE *MAYAE* TRADITION AND THE DYNAMICS OF CITIZENSHIP POLITICS: LOCAL WISDOM STUDY OF THE MAREGAM COMMUNITY IN TIDORE ISLANDS CITYWahyudin Noe<sup>1</sup>, Abd. Firman Bunta<sup>2</sup>, Triyanto<sup>3</sup>, Misnah<sup>4</sup>, Aziah Ismail<sup>5</sup>, Yuli Adhani<sup>6</sup>, M. Azrul Marsaoly<sup>7</sup><sup>1</sup>) Universitas Khairun, Ternate, Indonesia;<sup>2</sup>) Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Gorontalo, Indonesia;<sup>3</sup>) Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia;<sup>4</sup>) Universitas Tadulako, Palu, Indonesia;<sup>5</sup>) Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.Author Correspondence Email: [\\*wahyudinnoe@unkhair.ac.id](mailto:*wahyudinnoe@unkhair.ac.id)

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**ABSTRACT**

*This research is motivated by the researchers' concern about the low level of public awareness to actively participate in political life, such as being apathetic towards political choices and the strengthening of a patronage political culture in the form of political support in every general election. However, this is not reflected in the Maregam community in Tidore Islands City, where political attitudes and choices appear more active and varied because they are influenced by the "MAYAE" tradition (mutual help). The purpose of this research is to further and in-depth analyze the dynamics of citizenship politics in the Maregam community based on the "Mayae" tradition. This research used a qualitative approach with a case study. The results show that the dynamics of citizenship politics in the Maregam community based on the "Mayae" tradition are evident in: 1) active involvement in every aspect of political life, 2) respect for different political choices, 3) consensual decision-making as a way to reach agreement and solve problems, and 4) the candidate's track record and concern for citizens as the primary consideration in choice-making. The findings of this study constitute a good model of citizenship political participation that to be recommended to other communities, and serve as a basis for further research development.*

**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh keprihatinan peneliti atas rendahnya kesadaran masyarakat untuk berpartisipasi aktif dalam kehidupan politik, seperti bersikap apatis pada pilihan politik dan menguatnya budaya politik patronase dalam bentuk dukungan politik di setiap PEMILU. Namun hal tersebut tidak tergambar pada masyarakat Maregam di Kota Tidore Kepulauan, dimana sikap dan pilihan politik lebih nampak aktif dan variatif karena dipengaruhi oleh tradisi "MAYAE" (tolong-menolong). Tujuan penelitian ini untuk menganalisis lebih jauh dan mendalam tentang dinamika politik kewargaan masyarakat Maregam berbasis tradisi *Mayae*. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dinamika politik kewargaan masyarakat Maregam berbasis tradisi *Mayae* terlihat dari: (1) keterlibatan aktif dalam setiap kehidupan politik, 2) penghormatan terhadap pilihan politik yang berbeda, 3) pengambilan keputusan secara musyawarah untuk mencapai mufakat dan penyelesaian masalah, serta 4) rekam jejak calon dan kepedulian terhadap warga menjadi pertimbangan utama dalam memilih kandidat. Temuan penelitian ini merupakan model partisipasi politik kewargaan yang baik untuk direkomendasikan kepada masyarakat lainnya, serta menjadi landasan bagi pengembangan penelitian lebih lanjut.

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## INTRODUCTION

Local wisdom within a community can be a primary means to ensure civic participation in a village. Local wisdom is a way for individuals or organizations to maintain the cultural, religious, and customary values of their community (Ratih & Suryana, 2020). Development at the village level can be achieved through the support of community social capital, in addition to relying on government service channels. This marks a characteristic of developing countries that relatively accept informal spaces within the framework of a citizenship agenda. Spaces of informality, such as local wisdom values, are still strongly upheld by Indonesian society over a long period of time. The informal spaces even succeed in nurturing citizen political empowerment through cultural expression.

This research attempts to explore the local wisdom values of communities in political activities at the village level. The village in question is Maregam, located in the Tidore Islands, North Maluku Province, where a collective way of doing things is still the dominant norm. How citizens interact socially always shows the presence of an informal space domain through the tradition of "*Mayae*" or mutual help. *Mayae* signifies political activities involving comprehensive, independent, and active community participation in determining political choices based on understanding and awareness, while upholding social bonds for the advancement of village development. Levitsky, as cited in Pribadi (2022), the use of informal practices is due to the reason that formal institutional channels are often inadequate, necessitating the development of alternative procedures and norms to facilitate activities or address challenges. Informal practices are collective actions of rural residents using local wisdom social capital to promote participation, community empowerment, and volunteerism in pursuit of collective objectives.

The Maregam community's instinct for solidarity in political activities is manifested in the formal succession of village development involving the comprehensive participation of the residents. Although the community is relatively homogenous, this does not imply that they are politically monolithic; on the contrary, it displays a more varied participation in the context of political choices of every democratic agenda. This is contradictory to the prediction results from political citizenship studies, which have consistently implied that the collective drive of a homogenous society tends to produce a single power orientation, thereby making citizen participation monolithic.

Several case studies confirm that the political participation patterns of communities lean towards a total backup, which is culturally formed by a homogenous society. For example, in India, political activities of citizens are predominantly bound by the familial caste homogeneity when organizing parties as political identities (Ajay, 2021). The existence of a familial homogeneity also supports strategies for accumulating vote benefits through the practice of political money (Still & Dusi, 2020). Similarly, in Ukraine, the situation is not much different, where citizens facing elections are largely controlled by elites and village officials in decision-making, although the process is a result of clientelist relations involving land rent pricing (Zadorozhna, 2020).

These cases illustrate the phenomena of political participation in rural communities, which is strongly entwined with a patronage political culture that is linearly tied to a single form of support, which is dependent on the relational structure with actors (elites) or community leaders from a homogenous constituent base in rural societies, such as religious leaders or Kyai who have power with a santri attitude of *sami'na wa atbo'na* (Prayetno et al., 2023), ethnic leaders, youth leaders, headmen, and local political elites. Likewise, political choices are based on aspects of ethnic, religious, or family proximity (Boangmanalu &

Sembiring, 2022). This argument is plausible considering that varied participation is only found in heterogeneous societies.

However, an anomaly arises when a diversity of attitudes and political choices emerges in a homogenous society, as is the case with the Maregam village community. This is a unique and important aspect to investigate further, where there is a new variable influencing the political activities of citizens in a homogenous society. Here, the fundamental assumption is that local wisdom values determine community participation in the village. Hence, Hilman et al. (2019) argue that local wisdom produces behavioral norms that guide humans to act locally, both in the context of daily life and in the maintenance of their culture.

The preservation of the *Mayae* tradition has built social cohesion in the Maregam community. This tradition becomes a capital in building social networks, even though there are differences in attitudes and political choices in every democratic agenda; however, for them, different political choices are normal and do not lead to hatred and hostility that could ignite disputes or divisions in the community. On the contrary, mutual respect and regard for different political choices enhance a sense of sensitivity and belonging among community members, creating bonds of kinship, solidarity, and harmonious relations, as stated by Romdani & Suryadi (2021), that the manifestation of a citizen's democratic attitude can be seen from their role through the public sphere in the decision-making process. Such a condition demonstrates the development of political understanding and awareness.

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the significance of this research is to contribute to the socio-cultural domain of Civic Education, particularly the informal field of society as an everyday element of citizens in rural areas, which has been increasingly acknowledged in the democratic practices of post-colonial countries like Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to provide a critical analysis of the dynamics of citizenship politics in the Maregam community based on the *Mayae* tradition as an element of informal citizenship.

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted in Maregam Village, South Tidore District, Tidore Islands, North Maluku Province, from August to September 2023. Maregam Village was selected as the research site because it upholds strong social bonds based on local wisdom values and has been successful in maintaining them. This research used a qualitative approach with a case study. The aim is to analyze the extent to which the dynamics of citizenship politics of the Maregam community are based on *Mayae* traditions as reflected in everyday informal interactions. This case study is used because the Maregam community has unique characteristics that are not possessed by other communities, especially the political activities of villagers, which are based on local wisdom values.

Data were collected through three techniques carried out simultaneously, namely observation, interviews, and documentation studies. The observation method focused on the implementation of the *Mayae* tradition involving many people from diverse social backgrounds. Interviews were conducted with several community components as participants, namely religious leaders, customary leaders, youth leaders, village government officials, heads of the Village Representative Body (Badan Perwakilan Desa or BPD), and academics in Civic Education. Informant selection, like religious leaders, customary leaders, and youth leaders, was based on the consideration to obtain broader and deeper information related to the intricacies of Maregam residents' involvement in political activities, including the aspect of local wisdom values. The selection of participants from the village government

and the head of the BPD was based on obtaining information about the role of the village government in encouraging community participation in village development, including political participation. Whereas the informants from the field of Civic Education academics were chosen to strengthen the research study in both theoretical and empirical aspects regarding the political participation of citizens in contemporary society. The interview was semi-structured, where the researchers prepared various questions to be asked to the informant, and was flexible to obtain the necessary information. The interview schedule depended on the readiness of the informants so that they could plan their meetings without disrupting their daily activities. Data obtained from various literature sources were used as a comparative reference to the initial methods.

To strengthen the level of trustworthiness of the research data, Creswell (2010) used data validity checking consisting of triangulation, member checking, prolonged time, and peer debriefing. Triangulation is carried out where the data obtained can be checked for accuracy with several parties or other sources to avoid the researcher's subjectivity. Member checking is carried out so that informants know the results of the research and ensure that there is no rejection or support for the results of the research. Prolonged time means that researchers spend more time at the research location to obtain valid data related to the characteristics of the community, environment, and socio-cultural aspects of the local community. Meanwhile, peer debriefing is conducted to obtain additional information that could strengthen this research.

After the data were collected, they were analyzed using Miles & Huberman (2002) data analysis techniques, namely data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. Data reduction was carried out, where the data obtained will be grouped and organized according to the research objectives, and discarding unnecessary data. After grouping, the data were contextualized through interpretive analysis techniques to clarify their position. Analysis was then conducted, juxtaposed with data obtained from expert statements through documents such as selected journal articles and supporting books.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Maregam Village is located on Mare Island, approximately 4 km south of Tidore Island in the Tidore Islands City, North Maluku Province, with a population of 468 comprising 240 males and 228 females. Maregam Village has its own uniqueness in the aspect of political activities based on local wisdom values. The local wisdom value referred to here is "Mayae" or mutual help. *Mayae* is defined as a political activity that involves comprehensive and independent active community participation built on understanding and awareness in determining attitudes and political choices for village development. The implementation of the *Mayae* tradition in political activities is illustrated by several aspects as follows:

**Firstly, active involvement in political life.** The Maregam village community is highly enthusiastic about political life. The enthusiasm is evident from the relatively high involvement of its citizens in every political activity, such as exercising their political rights during elections at the national level for the selection of the president and vice president, at the regional level for the selection of governors and deputy governors as well as mayors and deputy mayors, and at the village level for the election of village heads, including the election of representatives sitting in the DPR RI (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Indonesia or Indonesian House of Representatives), DPRD (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah or Regional People's Representative Council) of North Maluku Province, and DPRD of Tidore City. The community is given the freedom to use their voting rights without any coercion in supporting a particular candidate, ensuring that elections can be conducted smoothly and peacefully.

Both older adults and young people synergize and collaborate in organizing elections, where some act as campaign teams supporting candidates and others serve as election organizers, such as the District Election Supervisory Committee (Panitia Pengawas Pemilu Kecamatan or Panwascam) and the Voting Committee (Panitia Pemungutan Suara or PPS), working professionally and independently without favouring any candidate. These various involvements demonstrate the development of civic skills in the Maregam community, which is one of the main components of civic competence (Abdinigrum & Supriyadi, 2023).

In addition, the indicator of political involvement is evident from the community's enthusiasm in village activities, where aspirations related to the needs and interests of the residents are directly communicated to the village government through open village meetings/discussions. For them, such involvement can make a significant contribution to building a more developed and advanced village. This demonstrates the development of collective understanding and awareness in politics and shows a good democratic order in the Maregam village community.

The phenomenon of high political participation in the Maregam community indicates active participation driven by communal ownership. Theoretically, it can be explained that the focus of collective ownership behaviour is closely related to empowerment, or the collective community members' expectation of mutual control and efficacy in collective action (Xu et al., 2010). Through the *Mayae* tradition embedded in the social behaviour of the Maregam community, a consensus value (sense of community) has been produced from strong socio-cultural relations, thereby influencing citizens' political participation as a collective community action. Such a process is organized based on cohesive values, carrying a sense of kinship as a social network that determines civic aspirations, where family homogeneity living in proximity in the same geographical area will take care of each other when needed.

Furthermore, political participation in the form of social networks supported by various positive experiential facts is directly felt by the citizens, thereby increasing trust in government institutional authorities. One factor facilitating socio-political development is maintained if trust in policymakers is preserved. Conversely, low political participation among citizens is due to their minimal trust in politicians and the government (Obiagu & Ajaps, 2022). This enables the active behavior of the Maregam village citizens during election moments and other decision-making activities. There is a well-established, harmonious relationship based on the trust given by the citizens to the village government as a result of accountable services.

In addition to a strong socio-cultural level, the socio-economic status of the residents also influences their political participation. The predominant Maregam community appears to have more than sufficient income from their local craft pottery home industries and fishing yields. Additionally, there is marine tourism with beautiful beaches and coral reefs, attracting many domestic tourists and opening opportunities to increase residents' income. With such socio-demographic and socio-economic conditions, the independent status of the residents can encourage stable political participation in the Maregam community. According to Waterson & Moffa (2016), "the more income a person has, the greater the likelihood of their involvement in political affairs."

Furthermore, the involvement of young people in politics in Maregam village is evident from their participation as election organizers and careers in government administration, such as village government apparatus, BUMDes (Badan Usaha Milik Desa or Village-Owned Enterprises) management, and BPD (Village Representative Body) management, with the

majority having higher education qualifications. This implies that the educational background of the community significantly influences involvement in political activities. The level of education takes a relatively influential percentage, where individuals with higher education are more actively involved compared to others with lower educational backgrounds (Obiagu & Ajaps, 2022). Joint involvement in making the general successful election a success is a local wisdom value that is deeply embedded in the Maregam community. The local wisdom values, as stated by Hatta Hamjah as a community figure, are “We have a proverb in this village, such as *Mo Sibū Masereta Mayae yang Ino Maku Marimoi La Sukuāe yang Haso-Haso dari Kuae to Makarja Madoya*. It means that if you are not busy with your work, let's work together so that this difficult work can be solved”. This statement shows a deep-rooted social bond to live with mutual respect for one another as a form of preserving the local wisdom of the Maregam community. As Clifford Geertz argued, local wisdom is a human effort to maintain the entity that determines the dignity and worth of an individual and their group (Hasibuan & Simatupang, 2021).

In general, the level of political participation in Maregam Village can be articulated where the environmental situation of the residents, easily accessible due to a limited geographical area and cultural homogeneity, enhances citizen political participation. This research finding corroborates Shen et al.'s (2023) findings that in a limited environment, there is a significant impact on the willingness to participate in the community. The more residents depend on and are satisfied with the communal space and facilities in their environment, the higher their willingness to participate.

**Secondly, respecting differences in political choices.** Ahead of the election events, the emergence of different political views in the community is inevitable. This phenomenon occurs due to differing interests, but such differences should not be a reason for the community to hate each other and act undemocratically. Behaviours to avoid include engaging in negative campaigning by spreading issues or hoax narratives (slander) to undermine or damage the reputation/image of political opponents, especially narratives that delve into the realm of SARA (Suku, Agama, Ras dan Antargolongan or Ethnicity, Religion, Race and Inter-Group), which should not be relevant in the context of leadership. If this happens, it can ignite disputes and even lead to divisions among the community.

Such dynamics are observed in the political activities in the Maregam community, where each election event unfolds very dynamically, as evidenced by the varied political choices of the community. In other words, the community's choices are not monotonous, focusing on only one candidate, but are spread among several candidates. Even though this village has a respected Traditional Chief (Gimalaha Kasomaemoa), Pak Imam, and the Sara Body, the political choices of the community can differ, even within the domestic realms of households, where strong emotional connections between parents and children or between husband and wife do not guarantee the same political choices. Every citizen has their own reference in assessing their respective candidates. This was stated by Usman Alting as a Traditional Figure and also the head of the BPD:

“Maregam villagers in every general election have a variety of political choices. The election of candidates is carried out independently without relying on the choice of community leaders, such as the Traditional Leader, Sara Agency, or Pak Imam, even though they have strong influence in the village. Residents choose based on the suitability or compatibility of the programs offered by the candidates.”

Political citizenship studies have consistently applied the notion that the collective drive of a homogenous society tends to produce a monolithic choice, linearly linked to a

single form of support due to dependency on actors (elites), such as religious leaders, ethnic leaders, or village heads. In contrast, varied and freely constructed political attitudes and choices are typically found in heterogeneous societies. However, this is not the case in Maregam, where differences in attitudes and political choices among residents are a common occurrence in every election. This makes Maregam a unique community and a model for political participation for other regions.

Political choice differences occur because there is the presence of social inclusion spaces for political conversations among citizens. This stems from differing views in supporting candidates. However, one thing the Maregam community avoids is excessive loyalty towards supported candidates, as it only leads to disputes among residents. Therefore, they strive to avoid coercion or bias towards others with different choices, while maintaining mutual respect and regard for differing political choices and sustaining harmonious relationships. In Fraser's concept, Bessone (2013), "toleration can take the form of the 'respect conception', in which tolerating and tolerated parties recognize each other as political and moral equals". This is evident in the lead-up to the election process, where the Maregam community freely promotes their respective candidates through narratives of their candidates' strengths as a political stance. The process is relaxed, not tense, and full of jokes and friendliness, making it an interesting topic for discussion. After the election event ends, there is no emergence of hatred or animosity from the different political choices. According to Lundgren & Nilsson (2023), "this condition will shape 'village resilience', where the community's approach to problems tends to be discursive and prioritizes unity behaviour".

This aspect is inseparable from the spirit of the *Mayae* tradition as a determinant factor in the community's political participation in the village, as Hilman et al. (2019) believe that "local wisdom produces behavioral norms that guide humans to act locally, both in the context of daily life and in maintaining their culture". The *Mayae* tradition serves as both a guide and social capital to be adhered to by the residents in building attitudes and political choices, as stated by Noe et al. (2018), "in the social culture must be a moral standard so that every member of the society must have the sensitivity to follow it and treat others based on the standard". Such a phenomenon depicts that the Maregam community has 'matured' in politics by habitually engaging in dialectics wisely and prudently.

**Thirdly, consensus through deliberation is a means to reach agreements and solve problems.** Deliberation is an Indonesian heritage still preserved by the Maregam community. It serves as a means to achieve consensus before making policy decisions and as a way to resolve issues. In the words of Kurniawan (2019), "the values that are an inseparable part of real life are manifested through the attitudes and behaviors of the community and include problem-solving strategies". The process of deliberation for consensus is illustrated in the discussion of various programs in the village, taking the form of community gatherings or general meetings. The procedure begins at the neighbourhood unit (Rukun Tetangga or RT) level by inviting representatives for each Family Card (Kartu Keluarga, or KK), who then convey various aspirations related to the needs of the residents, and then these are forwarded to the village government for discussion among representatives of each RT. On the other hand, the village government always strives to accommodate and channel residents' aspirations with principles of transparency and fairness, which characterize good governance. Every deliberation always considers the priority scale of programs and the village budget ceiling. Hence, Maregam Village has previously received an award as one of the best villages in financial management at the provincial level.

The prioritized programs include those for the public interest, such as the construction of village roads, sea breakwaters, landslide retaining walls, fishing boats, etc. The implementation of these programs always involves the entire community, who enthusiastically participate and contribute directly, driven by the spirit of the *Mayae* tradition. The *Mayae* tradition serves as an informal space for the Maregam community, facilitating the political agenda of the citizens. The informal dimension is where social values and norms are used as guidelines and procedures to optimize citizen participation.

Furthermore, deliberations are also used as a means for residents to resolve various issues in the village, such as family disputes over inheritance division, land ownership disputes, or domestic issues (e.g., adultery cases). Usually, such issues are resolved through legal channels at police stations and courts, but the Maregam community prefers to settle them in a familial manner, inviting the conflicting parties and their families (stakeholders) to find a solution. This approach is more effective in resolving problems, locally termed “Folu Keluarga” (mediation). Deliberation serves as the basis for policy-making in resolving various issues or community activities in the village, so many development programs in the village succeed because they adhere to local wisdom values of deliberation with the spirit of *Mayae*. According to Berenschot & van Klinken (2018), “The pattern of informal work, characterized by dependence on informal and personal connections, has produced a certain form of citizen politics. This is possible due to dealing with the presence of unresponsive and unpredictable state institutions.” This aligns with Levitsky’s statement as cited by Pribadi (2022):

“Relying on reciprocal norms within informal cycles includes at least three reasons. First, it is done because formal institutional channels are inadequate, thus necessitating the development of procedures and norms that facilitate activities or solve problems. Second, as an alternative step for actors (political actors) whose solutions are not considered by formal institutions. Third, it motivates to achieve goals that are not publicly acknowledged or accepted.”

The essence of this approach is a collective consciousness for familial cohesion, encouraging those involved in conflicts to recognize their mistakes (self-introspection) and to advise each other to prevent the issue from escalating and to ensure its quick resolution. Usually, the mediation process begins at the neighborhood unit (RT) level. If a consensus is not reached, the issue is then escalated to the village level for a binding decision.

The establishment of good relationships among residents in resolving issues is maintained because cultural characteristics within the community is maintained. The tolerant attitude, mutual trust, and ability to cooperate in practicing the *Mayae* tradition among the Maregam community reflect the supporting strength of social capital, ensuring that decision-making does not lead to conflict reactions. According to Pretty and Ward (cited from Rocca & Zielinski, 2022), this phenomenon is referred to as the possession of high socio-cultural capacity. Trustworthy relationships, they argue, are sufficient to create an effective cooperative atmosphere for problem resolution. Additionally, there are binding consequences for actions that deviate from the established collective commitments.

Various informal meetings, as typically conducted by the Maregam community, involve mediation of civil cases or other issues concerning the interests of the village. This demonstrates the strong support of the community for the authority of customs and traditions. One psychological reason for this practice is that it is considered more conducive to ensuring certainty and benefit, facilitating the community to exercise its citizenship rights. Such strategies have a positive impact on empowering political participation and social

integration. Community meetings, both among residents and between residents and village officials, can address collective needs and determine the priority steps for community aspirations.

Several cases illustrate that informal meetings organized in rural communities, whether conducted through polite demeanor (Pribadi, 2022) or storytelling among residents (Datta, 2019; Yin, 2018) take forms of indirect political empowerment. Through these informal practices, residents can easily express their desires, overcome passive emotions, and create a collective imagination of village development driven by a sense of shared ownership. A similar case found in this research is that informal meetings (deliberations) to achieve consensus appear effective in resolving faced issues. Moreover, informal meetings involving elements and inter-family groups have resulted in the creation of a cooperative citizenship partnership, where members assist each other.

**Fourthly, the track record and concern for residents are the main considerations in choosing a candidate.** When facing elections, the Maregam community does not arbitrarily choose candidates but bases on considerations related to the candidate's track record and their concern for the residents. The track record is a primary consideration during elections. The dominant consideration for the residents' choice is the extent of the candidate's attention and care for their area and village, or at least what achievements the candidate has made. One example is the current head of Maregam Village, chosen by the residents due to his two decades of service as a village official. His experience in managing village governance, accompanied by a demeanor that nurtures the residents, led him to become the local government leader.

Moreover, even if an emotional connection with the candidate has been established, if the candidate lacks contributions or achievements for the residents, it is considered ordinary. The contributions referred to here are for the benefit of the village community, such as advocating for adequate infrastructure. Thus, without concern for the residents, it is difficult to obtain support from them. In contemporary political discourse, village governance provides space for the consolidation of social transformation. The 2014 Village Law signals the advancement of villages through empowerment and resident participation agendas. According to Rozaki (2022), to achieve this ideal opportunity, it is most important to be conditioned by a dynamic leadership model. In other words, a visionary leadership style is needed to produce innovative policy products that drive development. The workings of visionary leadership support a harmonious political constellation, free from political nepotism, and prioritize community trust through innovative program approaches to residents.

So far, the innovation programs in Maregam Village have focused on ensuring independent electricity availability, improving residents' skills in pottery design, and developing the village as a tourist destination. Additionally, there is the "One Family One Graduate" program, initiated through scholarships from the Village-Owned Enterprises (Bumdes), along with other empowerment programs. The realization of these innovation programs, which are directly experienced by the residents, increasingly fosters high trust in the village head's leadership. Such a leadership relationship pattern indirectly illustrates the implementation of political education, thereby encouraging participation in selecting leaders based on the motivation of their track record as a determining factor.

On the other hand, particularly regarding elections at the smallest political unit level, such as neighborhood unit (RT) leaders, in assessing track records, residents first consider the candidate's age. The reasoning is based on the factor of leadership and exemplary

character (elders) believed to be capable of nurturing residents and possessing better manners. This phenomenon shows that emotional maturity is a primary consideration for residents' choice. For example, during deliberations at the RT and village levels, an RT leader with good emotional maturity can better articulate aspirations and make more accurate decisions/policies. This aligns with Sashkin's research findings in (Rozaki, 2022), suggesting that clientelism-based leadership (relying on the influence of notable patronage) in rural societies does not always yield a negative image. Leadership with the strength of friendship and familial networks can refer to programmatic relationships like community development, social security, and involvement in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of village development.

Residents' concern in choosing is also based on interpersonal drivers, such as relationship building and persuasive communication by candidates. This reality aligns with the informal drive among rural residents, which significantly influences their political participation. Participation in choosing coincides with the notion of mutual help; if meetings are conducted en masse, they represent public action, leading to cooperative voting in the personal realm. In short, when people receive help, a corresponding compassion emerges as a form of reciprocal action, manifesting as voluntary work in the political realm (Chang, 2015).

When a candidate or their campaign team visits Maregam Village (residents' homes) to establish communication and good relations, getting to know each other, that is where the residents' interest in the candidate begins. Although the practice of transactional politics, such as distributing necessities, still occurs and is considered a sign of the giver's concern, what truly captures the residents' attention is the candidate's realistic program delivery that could benefit the village in the future. The interaction between them, locally termed “baku ator” (discussing amicably), serves as a channel to align the candidate's interests with those of the Maregam village community.

The residents' attraction to candidates involves economic factors and collective assets. Eventually, voting in elections results in reciprocal policies that benefit the mass base. This pattern is more commonly known as socio-economic relations in election participation. This occurs in the Maregam community, where each resident can create space to build individual access to candidates, which in turn forms diverse political choices. In line with Tao et al. (2011) findings, the role of political trust becomes a primary variable in citizen participation in several villages in China. The close relationship between local government officials and village residents is a determining indicator. The cause-and-effect mechanism in political trust significantly influences voter participation, not because of its impact on psychological attachment or alienation from the political process, but because it can deliver tangible results expected by the voters.

## CONCLUSION

Active citizen participation, based on understanding and awareness in determining attitudes and political choices, is crucial in determining the quality of a country's democracy. This form of participation, as seen in the political life of the Maregam community, demonstrates political activities based on the local wisdom values of *Mayae* (mutual assistance). *Mayae* is defined as a political activity involving comprehensive, independent, and active community participation in determining political choices based on understanding and awareness, while upholding social bonds for the advancement of village development. The dynamics of citizenship politics of the Maregam community based on *Mayae* traditions were depicted in several things, including: 1) active involvement in every aspect of political life, 2)

respect for different political choices, 3) consensus decision-making as a way to reach agreement and solve problems, and 4) the candidate's track record and concern for citizens as the primary consideration in choice-making. One unique characteristic of the Maregam community is that, despite being a homogenous society, the attitudes and political choices of the residents are relatively varied during elections. This contradicts the consistent predictions of political citizenship studies that the collective drive of a homogenous society tends to produce a single power orientation, leading to monolithic citizen participation. The Maregam community phenomenon can serve as a model for citizen political participation that other societies should follow. Therefore, the Maregam community phenomenon can be used as a good model of citizenship political participation to be recommended to other communities and a new source of knowledge as teaching material for classroom learning, as well as being a basis for further research development.

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### Disclosure of Interests

The authors do not have any potential conflict of interest to disclose.

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