

**DEMOCRACY AND AUTONOMY TRANSFORMATION  
IN THE GOVERNANCE OF MENGWI VILLAGE  
IN THE TRANSITION ERA:  
A CULTURAL STUDIES PERSPECTIVE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study discusses “Democracy and Autonomy Transformation in the Governance of Mengwi Village in the Transition Era: A Cultural Studies Perspective”. The problem investigated was the shift in the nation’s approach to the policy of villages after the reign of New Order. In this era, the policy of democratization and decentralization appeared till the village level. However, the policy was not totally implemented in the villages. The aims of this study are: to describe democracy transformation in the village governance in the transition era, to clarify autonomy transformation in the village governance in the transition era, and to analyze the implication and the sense of democracy and autonomy transformation to the development of village governance.

This study was conducted employing qualitative method. Various forms of democracy and autonomy transformation in the village governance took place during the transition era. In the first stage, the primary and secondary data were collected. In the second stage, the theory applied for examining the data was chosen, and in the third stage, the collected and classified data were analyzed and interpreted. In the fourth stage the results of the study were reported and constructed. The theories applied in this study include; democracy, political democracy, substantial democracy, decentralization and political culture. The approaches applied were Transpolitic and post-structuralism.

The results of the study showed that; first, the village democracy in the first transition era (1998-1999) was mostly still uniform, and there were not many choices in the implementation of the village democracy. The village autonomy was still blocked in centralistic pattern, homogeneous with hierarchical structure. Second, in the second transition era (2000-2004) the role of the village representatives became so democratic accompanied by the extended village autonomy. Third, in the third transition era (2005-2008) democracy became retransformed to the procedural pattern accompanied by the strengthening of supra village government power decreasing the autonomy of the villages. Fourth, democracy and autonomy transformation contributed to the demand for the strengthening of democracy institutions, better community participation and more accountable public services, transparency and

responsiveness to what was needed by the people. Fifth, democracy and village autonomy transformation, in addition to having the sense of involving the active participation of the society in the village governance, also had the sense of strengthening the civil and political society in every village social organization which actualized what was needed by the society. This condition at the same time functioned as the responses to nation's hegemony through the supra village government which took place until the first transition era.

Key word: democracy and autonomy transformation, supra village power relation, dynamic of village governance, cultural studies.

## INTRODUCTION

This study discusses “Democracy and Autonomy Transformation in the Governance of Mengwi Village in the Transition Era: A Cultural Studies Perspective”. To understand this matter, the forms of village governance starting from the end of the reign of New Order were investigated. During the transition era which started from 1998, there was a shift in government from the one oriented toward the nation to that oriented toward the society, from the authoritarian to egalitarian and from government to governance. This condition was accompanied by the policy of implementing democratization and decentralization up to the village level which shifted the pattern of power relationship between the central-regional government and the village government.

However, some problems emerged in the implementation of the policy especially that in the village level. There were some gaps among realities (*das sollen*), and there were some problems in regard to the relationship of the dual village system and what was expected (*das sein*), that is, the realization of governance in the village level, and it is these which have encouraged me to carry out this study. The particular problem investigated was democracy and autonomy transformation in the village level which took place during the transition era – the era after the reign of New Order collapsed (1998-2008). There are three main research problems in this study. First, how democracy was transformed in the village governance in the transition era; Second, how the autonomy transition took place in the village governance in the transition

era; and third, what was the implication and sense of the democracy and autonomy transformation to the development of village governance.

Generally, the aims of this study are; to describe the democracy and autonomy transformation in the governance of Mengwi village in the transition era; to clarify the extended management process of the village governance through the involvement of the stakeholders in the social and political aspects as well as the utility of the natural resources and the finance of the villages; and to analyze the application of transparency principles, accountability, and participation in the implementation of the village governance directed to what is needed by the society. Specifically, this study aims at: describing the democracy transformation and the village governance in the transition era; second, clarifying the autonomy transformation in the village governance in the transition era; and third, analyzing the implication and the sense of democracy transformation and village autonomy to the development of governance.

Academically, this study has some benefits: first, it is able to discover a broader thinking framework concerning the village governance with its democracy and autonomy transformation directed to the implementation of transparency principles, accountability and participation; second, to contribute a new way of thinking in the management of good and democratic village governance, and to contribute to the development of cultural studies; and third, to build the basis for further researches on democracy and autonomy transformation in the village governance by applying the perspective of cultural studies.

Furthermore, practically, this study is beneficial to the village government elements and all the stakeholders, such as the village heads and the village representatives (BPD). The civil society will be able to know its responsibilities and functions by implementing transparency principles, participation, accountability, and responsibilities in order to develop the village governance.

## MATERIAL AND DISCUSSION

This study applied qualitative research method which illustrates democracy and autonomy transformation in the village governance in the transition era. Various forms of democracy and autonomy transformation with their implication and the sense in the development of the village government were investigated. First, primary and secondary data were collected, and second, the appropriate theories were chosen for analyzing the data. Third, the selected data were selected and interpreted, and fourth, the process of writing the report and constructing all the study results was done. In order to achieve the goal, various theories were applied such as; democracy theory, political democracy, substantial democracy, decentralization theory, and political cultural theory.

In order to know the results of this study, the explanation is as follows: first, from the analysis of transition era based on the normative and sociological criteria which was focused on the early transition era, that is, from the end of the reign of the New Order (1998) to the next

government and the characteristic of power relationship between the supra village government and the villages manifested in the legislation controlling characteristic, the reality of the era transition can be divided into three. The first transition era (1998-1999) still left the strength of the central influence and standardization of the village government management and it was the end of the implementation of the regulations number 5/1979 concerning the village government; the second transition era (2000-2004) was the peak of the political liberalities when a wide autonomy for the regions and villages was provided by implementing the regulations number 22/1999 concerning regional government; and in the third transition era (2005-2008) there was a tendency to rearrange some rights for the regions and villages by the central government by implementing the regulations number 32/2004 concerning the regional government and regulation number 72/2005 concerning villages.

Second, from the analysis of democracy transformation in the village governance, in reality, the village democracy in the first transition

era was authoritarian-leviathan; there were not many choices in the implementation of the village democracy. The term, structure, function and mechanism in conducting the village government had been standardized. The paradigm of the authoritarian political arrangement did not give sufficient chance for diversity in pattern and management of the village government to emerge. In the second transition era, a basic shift occurred toward Lilliputian-Libertarian by replacing the village consultation body which previously had corporative characteristic with the monolithic power in the village head with the Village Representative Body (BPD-1 = Badan Perwakilan Desa) which was much more democratic so it could produce a more equal relation of power. This condition increased the freedom of the villages to be more creative in arranging the village policy which was adapted to the tradition, the need and aspiration of the community. Entering the third transition era, the village democracy was retransformed to the pattern of procedural-democracy, that is, the reorganization of the institutional system and the process of democracy by forming a

new institution called the Village Consultation Board (BPD-2 = Badan Permusyawarahan Desa) whose function was weaker than that of BPD-1).

Third, from the analysis of the autonomy transformation in the village governance, the village autonomy in the first transition era was still centralistic – homogeneity which was constrained by centralistic pattern, homogenized by hierarchical structure making it difficult to keep it beyond the system previously determined by the central government. Such a condition made it difficult to manage the village governance which still referred to dualistic pattern. In the second transition era, there was autonomy transformation which was centralistic – heterogeneity in which a wider autonomy was delivered to the village level. Previously, the service aspects were de-concentrated on the village heads, while the strategic decision making related to villages was still concentrated in Jakarta. Transformation from the power of centralization to decentralization took place by developing the village governance based on plurality, participation, true autonomy, democra

cy, empowerment of the society. In the third transition era, the village autonomy was re-transformed toward the form of heterogeneity-decentralist with the strong controlling power of the state via the supra-village government over the villages through the policy on the villages especially in terms of formation, deletion, merging, arrangement of the village government and leaders, village finance and development. All of them were conducted by the regency government officials determined through the regional policy referring to the central government policy.

Fourth, from the analysis of the implication of the democracy and autonomy transformation, there were claims that the democracy institutions be strengthened, that the society participation be improved, that more transparent public services be created, and that accountability and responsiveness toward what was needed by the village society be needed. The village government does not run and control its own as it was practically done before, but it has been controlled and adapted to the condition of civil and political societies (BPD1 and BPD 2) which are active,

articulative, and organized. Transformation of democracy and autonomy means the implementation of the transparent principles, accountability, and participation in the village governance. The presence of civil society organized in various village social organizations which dare articulate what is needed by the village society is the feedback of the state's hegemony taking place previously. The village apparatus, especially BPD 1, as political society has acted as the mediating structure which translates the state's power in the lowest level to become legally-based government, that is, the transformation from the rule of power to the rule of law.

## **RESEARCH NOVELTY**

The novelty of this study: First, transformation occurred from the normative democracy which was authoritarian-leviathan in the first transition era to the substantial democracy which was libertarian-liliput in the second transition era. This condition was followed by the minimization of the village bureaucratic domination which was

then equalized by the role of the Village Representation Board (BPD-1 or the other village informal institutions, such as traditional banjar, traditional villages, and youth organizations. The equality in roles among the institutions in the second transition era was part of the social principles in which the participative values developed authentically.

Second, substantial democracy which was libertarian-lilliputi in the second transition era tended to be re-transformed into the procedural democracy in the third transition era. The existence of the Village Representative Board was replaced by the Village Consultation Board as the new legislative board in the villages. The board still has the role of looking after the tradition, with the village heads, producing the policies of the villages, accommodating and delivering the society's aspiration, and controlling the management of the village government, but it lacked the right of asking the village heads for their responsibilities.

Third, autonomy transformation occurred from that which was centralistic-homogeny in the first transition era into that which was

decentralization-heterogeneity in the second transition era. The perspective of governance which minimized the state's power was then implemented by minimizing the government intervention in the livelihood of the village society. The society has a wide autonomy to manage itself because the government role is restricted only as the regulator and facilitator. There has been a kind of mechanism, practice and system of government, and the villagers manage their resources and solve the public problems emerging.

Fourth, the decentralization-heterogeneity autonomy in the second transition era was retransformed into that which was centralistic-homogeny in the third transition era. The supra village government withdrew some of the village autonomy rights making it unable to create such an atmosphere as it likes that it can facilitate the political society in the village legislative institution; the civil and economic society in the village can synergize with the village government.

Fifth, the condition of the democracy and autonomy transformation which was dynamic-fluctuant in that transition strongly influenced the development of the

village governance. The development of the village governance which had already been good in the second transition era became faint in the third transition era in line with the role of the supra village government, which within a certain limit—though not as great and strong as in the first transition—had taken part in restraining the progress of the democracy and autonomy transformation of the villages. It seemed that there was no consistency in commitment and political will of the government to implement the policy of democracy and autonomy that contributed to the realization of the village governance.

### **RESEARCH CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of this research is that the democracy and autonomy transformation in the village governance which is in the forms of transparency principles, accountability and society participation commencing since the end of the first transition era, reached its peak in the second transition era, and restrained in the transition era. The transformation of the village democracy which is

actually the changes in structure, function, mechanism of the village government can be made more democratic by paying attention to the institutionalization of the political participation of the society, the effective control of the village representative and critical strength, transparency in the process of the village policy, and the accountability toward the village society as the owner of the sovereignty. Transformation of the village autonomy means high respect to the village duality, local genius in the village, implementation of decentralization and to give authority to the village to handle its cases which was originally its own rights in the frame of a united country.

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