Performing the state: Everyday practices, corruption and reciprocity in Middle Indonesian civil service
Tidey, S.

Citation for published version (APA):
Tidey, S. (2012). Performing the state: Everyday practices, corruption and reciprocity in Middle Indonesian civil service
In the race for the position of governor and vice-governor during the 2008 East Nusa Tenggara gubernatorial elections three candidate couples were cleared by the General Elections Committee to run. The Golkar Party supported the candidate couple consisting of Ibrahim Agustinus Medah and Paulus Moa, better known under their packages’ acronym of Tulus. Medah boasts an impressive resume as an upper echelon civil servant. He started his career as a vice-district head in West Rote and had been the regency head of the Kupang regency for two consecutive periods before joining the gubernatorial elections. He also has a long involvement in various Protestant church organizations. Furthermore, he has been the regional chairman of the East Nusa Tenggara Golkar council since 2004. Medah is from the Rote Ndao regency. His running mate Paulus Moa is a Catholic who is born in the regency of Flores Sikka. Similar to Medah, Moa is also an upper echelon civil servant. He started out in civil service in Sikka to which he returned in 1998, after having taken up various civil service positions in Irian Jaya and East Timor, as regency head. After this, Moa became the vice-chairman of East Nusa Tenggara’s provincial parliament.

Partai Demokrasi Indonesia –Perjuangan (PDI-P) supported the second candidate couple: Frans Lebu Raya and Esthon Foenay’s Fren. Frans Lebu Raya is a Catholic from the East Flores regency. He holds a Bachelor’s Degree from Kupang’s Nusa Cendana University. His occupational background differs slightly from that of most other candidates. Although officially a civil servant, Lebu Raya built his career in teaching. He started out as a teacher at a junior high school, but moved on to lecture at Kupangese universities and academies. Eventually he became the vice-chairman of East Nusa Tenggara’s provincial parliament in 1999 followed by, in 2003, the position of vice-governor of the province. Lebu Raya has also been strongly involved in various NGOs and has been particularly active in topics such as STI and HIV prevention. His running mate Esthon Foenay is a Kupang-born Protestant. He holds a Master’s Degree and has held various upper echelon civil service positions on provincial level. He has been involved in various church-related organizations. An interesting side-note regarding Esthon Foenay is that he has been a long-time Golkar Party affiliate before switching allegiances to PDI-P for the 2008 gubernatorial elections. The weak link between candidates and political parties in current Indonesian direct district elections.
head elections has already been noted by Michael Buehler and Paige Tan (2007). Reasons for PDI-P’s acceptance of a candidate who has been aligned with its most important opponent is not hard to guess.

The Foenay family, namely, is somewhat of Timorese royalty. In the Dutch colonial era the Foenays, namely, held the royal title of sub-king (*fetor*) for the principality Foenay which was a part of the larger united principality of Kupang. Although the former kings do not hold any official political or administrative offices anymore, many former royal families remain united in national and regional organizations that center around a main focus of preserving culture and tradition. In recent years after regional autonomy, however, various royal families have also tried to convert their former ‘traditional legitimacy’ (Weber 1958) into current political success. During some interviews I conducted with members of the Foenay family in 2007 it became clear that the Foenay family planned to do exactly this. Ferdinand Foenay and his wife Jeane Foenay showed me around their compound, told me how much land the Foenay used to own, and explained about the former relationships between the Foenay and their subordinates. They claimed that the Foenay name was still a revered and respected one and, furthermore, expressed the hope that their traditional good reputation and royal lineage would evoke political support from former subordinates. They were very willing to support the family’s efforts of obtaining district head positions with financial means. Since the implementation of direct district head elections the Foenay have managed to get members of their clan to join in various elections. Alexander Foenay (a cousin of Esthon) joined the 2007 mayoral elections in Kupang. Ruben Foenay (another cousin), at the time vice-regent, ran in the 2008 Kupang Regency elections as a candidate for Golkar Party. Furthermore, Ed Foenay (yet another cousin), who is currently a member of East Nusa Tenggara parliament for political party Gerindra, plans to join the upcoming 2012 mayoral elections. Esthon Foenay’s royal pedigree combined with the family’s financial support thus helps explain PDI-P’s acceptance of a long-time Golkar Party affiliate.

The final package to gain acceptance into the 2008 gubernatorial elections was Gaul of Gaspar Parang Ehok and Julius Bobo with the support of a coalition consisting of Partai Pemegak Demokrasi Indonesia (PPDI), Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB), Pelopor, and Partai Nasional Benteng Kerakyatan Indonesia. Gaspar Parang Ehok is a Flores Manggarai-born Catholic. He obtained a Master’s Degree at a German university. As most candidates, his occupational background is in civil service. After having been the Regency Head of Flores Manggarai he occupied various upper echelon positions in provincial civil service. Running mate Julius Bobo, in contrast, was the only accepted candidate with a background in business. Born in Protestant Sumba, Bobo moved to Jakarta and obtained a Master’s Degree. He stayed in Jakarta and worked for various private sector companies and eventually engaged in various political endeavors there. In 2005 he returned to Sumba to join

---

106 Gaul means ‘cool’.
the West Sumba direct district head elections as PDI-P’s candidate but lost. According to Vel, even though Bobo as a former businessman had plenty of economic capital he was unsuccessful due to his lack of (local) social capital (Vel 2008: 201-235).

Before assessing differences between packages and candidate couples in terms of capital (see also Table 1), it is worth noting some striking similarities. All candidates of the three accepted packages were middle-aged men, most of who have held upper echelon positions in civil service and/or have held significant political positions. No women and no one under the age of forty-eight were included in any of the accepted packages. With the exception of Julius Bobo, all candidates were bureaucrats. Also, no Muslim candidate was part of any of the eight packages that initially enlisted at KPUD. Following Vel (2008: 216-219), nevertheless, differences between candidates can be discerned when assessing them on various forms of capital.

As we have seen throughout this thesis social capital is a prerequisite for reciprocal returns, which in elections take on the form of financial contributions or votes. Looking at the three candidate couples two types of, perhaps unlikely, social capital immediately emerge, namely, those of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘religion’. I propose to view ethnicity and religion as social, instead of cultural or symbolic, capital based on my conversations with ‘success team’ members, party affiliates, and candidates. As mentioned in Chapter Seven, I was told repeatedly by these members of the political class how the constituency\(^\text{307}\) was not ready yet for democracy. ‘The people’, as was explained to me, voted for ‘emotional’ reasons and preferred to give their vote to candidates with a similar ethnic or religious background. Making an ‘ethnic connection’ or religious link with voters was therefore a strategic way of establishing a large new network of voters. These assumptions on motivations for voting were strategically translated into the creation of packages consisting of candidates with different religious and ethnic backgrounds. All packages consisted of one Protestant and one Catholic candidate. All packages, additionally, consisted of candidates who represented different islands. All packages had a candidate from Flores. Tulus, furthermore, had Medah from Rote, Fren had Foenay from Timor, and Gaul had Bobo from Sumba. Not surprisingly, no candidates from the smaller East Nusa Tenggara islands such as Savu, Solor, or Alor were represented. In this attempt to appeal to voters’ emotionally charged motivations for voting ‘ethnic’ communities became imagined in radically novel ways. As said in Chapter Seven, even the most superficial reading of ethnicity, clans and kingdoms of the islands of present-day East Nusa Tenggara reveals great internal strife and intra-island differences (Schulte Nordholt 1971; Fox 1977; Hågerdal 2007) This creating of imagined ‘ethnic’ communities (Anderson 1983) based on island of origin thus seems to be a peculiar ‘modern’ strategy in East Nusa Tenggara politics. Presenting a package with candidates from disparate island

\(^{307}\) Usually referred to as rakyat or ‘the people’/’the masses’.
therefore serves as a means to create closeness—social capital—to a new kind of ‘ethnic’ network.

I have previously discussed post-election balas-jasa practices, or the returning of favors that were granted to a candidate at the time of elections to career civil servants, political parties or businessmen. Another form of social capital thus consists of members of the inner circle of the political class: those department heads that can help persuade subordinates into voting for a certain candidates, those political parties or members of parties that enabled a candidate’s acceptance, and those contractors and other businessmen that help sponsor campaigns. Tulus’ Medah’s long entrenchment in the Kupang regency civil service earned him the loyalty of that regency’s civil service. Both Tulus and Fren, who due to their backing of big political parties were more likely to win than Gaul, were supported by local companies and businessmen. This is why I rate Gaul lower on my assessment of candidate couples’ capital.

Local companies and businessmen show their support by contributing money, therefore these forms of social capital cannot be distinguished entirely from economic capital. In Chapter Seven I gave a tentative overview of the sources of financial support for the three candidate couples. To recap, Tulus and Fren appear to have received greater financial support than Gaul. Despite having the only businessman in a candidate couple, Gaul seemed mostly dependent on small donations given by individual supporters in Kupang, something that also came to the fore in the lack of Gaul posters, flyers and stickers throughout Kupang. Because of this, Gaul receives no credits for economic capital in Table 1.

With regards to cultural capital, all candidates held university Degrees. Tulus’ Medah was well-known in Kupang as the head of the wider Kupang regency, which gave him a slight advantage in bureaucratic experience over the other candidates. Fren’s Lebu Raya’s involvement with NGOs and HIV prevention was often praised. Gaul’s Bobo’s experience as a businessman was appreciated as a welcome counterbalance to the bureaucrats. Overall, however, when assessing and comparing the candidates’ economic, social, and cultural capital there is no clear difference between Tulus and Fren with regards to a decisively more convincing composition of capital. Gaul, nevertheless, already lags behind. If we, nevertheless, add symbolic capital, as legitimate competence or authority (Bourdieu 1986: 245; Bourdieu 1989:17), clearer differences emerge.

First of all, Fren’s Foenay status as belonging to a fetor family gave him a kind of prestige which none of the other candidates had. Esthon Foenay notably demonstrated his royal heritage, among other things by actively participating in Indonesian royal raja networks and promoting the preservation of culture and tradition. During the elections jokes circulated on cell phones regarding Foenay and his claim to royal lineage, portraying him as a hansip, an unpaid village security keeper. Such a security keeper has some government-
given authority but receives no formal salary. Although a *hansip* might pretend to be a
government official he is generally considered an imitator of official authority at best. By
comparing Foenay to a *hansip* the joke reminds the listener that Foenay comes from a *fetor*
(head of a principality) family, instead of a *raja* (royal) family. His claim to traditional
authority based on his family’s former royal status is therefore nothing but an imitation of the
real traditional authority held by *rajas*. Even though ridiculed, such jokes nevertheless
indicate that Foenay’s claim to royal status was widely recognized, earning the *Fren* couple
extra credits for symbolic capital.

Whereas Foenay drew on a more ‘traditional’ normative sphere to increase his status,
the anti-KKN discourse offered a very valuable ‘modern’ source of symbolic capital, namely
that of having a reputation of being ‘clean’ (*bersih*) and ‘free from KKN’ (*bebas dari KKN*).
In an era of direct district head elections, candidates put great effort into upholding a clean
image. In their ‘vision and mission’ booklets and pamphlets, all packages in NTT’s
gubernatorial elections stressed their aversion to KKN and their commitment to fighting
corruption and promoting Good Governance.

As mentioned in Chapter Seven, *Gaul* stated in their ‘vision’ that, ‘government
bureaucracy has to appear clean and authoritative with the paradigm of good and clear
governance’\(^{108}\), and dedicated a special section on how KKN can be eradicated in their view.
*Fren* promoted as one of its points a revision of the system of law and justice and the,
‘development of a culture of law to a realization of a governance which is clean and free
from KKN’.\(^{109}\) *Tulus* also supported the eradication of KKN. Interestingly, *Tulus*’ flyer also
dedicated half of their flyer refuting ‘slanderous claims’ made against their candidate Medah.
During his reign as regency head of Kupang, namely, Medah had been accused of being
corrupt on several occasions (Tempo 21/07/2007; Tempo 10/10/2007). In their flyer *Tulus*
vehemently denies these accusations and stresses how investigations have cleared Medah of
all blame.

Whether or not Medah was indeed as ‘clean’ as he claimed and whether or not the
other candidates were as free from involvement in corruptive practices as they claimed is not
necessarily relevant. It is hard to imagine any candidate being completely ‘clean’ in an
environment where ‘saying thanks with money’ or ‘answering a service’ is polite, especially
in the field of politics. What is important, however, is that accusations of involvement in
corruption have become a strategic tool in tainting opponents’ reputation by attracting media
attention, instigating investigations, fuelling everyday gossip about the elections, and
forfeiting the possibility of accumulating valuable symbolic capital, which is why *Tulus*
scores lowest on my assessment of candidate couples’ capital (Table 1). In this case the

---

\(^{108}\) *birokrasi pemerintahan tampil bersih dan berwibawa dengan paradigma good and clean governance* 
[English in original text].

\(^{109}\) *Pengembangan budaya hukum ke arah terwujud nya pemerintahan yang bersih dan bebas KKN.*
statement made on Tulus’ flyer holds true that, ‘slander is worse than murder.’ Although Tulus and Fren thus had similar scores for economic, social, and cultural capital, the addition of symbolic capital adds some crucial credits for the Fren candidate couple, resulting not only in a higher score on the assessment of capital of the three candidate couples but also in a more balanced composition of capital.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of capital</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Symbolic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fren</td>
<td>Frans Lebu Raya</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esthon Foenay</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulus</td>
<td>Agustinus I. Medah</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paulus Moa</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaul</td>
<td>Gaspar P. Ehok</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julius Bobo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Composition of capital candidate couples

[^110]: *fitnah lebih jahat daripada membunuh.*